

Schooling and Practices of Freedom of 'Out' Queer Youth on Prince Edward Island

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to the required standards

Dr. Fiona Walton, Supervisor

Dr. Kate Tilleczeck, Co-supervisor

Thomas V. Hilton
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Name of Author:	Thomas V. Hilton		
Faculty:	Faculty of Education		
Degree:	Master of Education	Year:	2014
Name of Supervisor(s):	Dr. Fiona Walton		
Members of Supervisory Committee: Dr. Kate Tilleczek			

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Signature: Thomas V. Hilton
Address: 550 University Ave.
Charlottetown, PE
C1A 4P3
Date: March 17, 2014

University of Prince Edward Island

Faculty of Education

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Examiners

Dr. Fiona Walton

Dr. Kate Tilleczek

Abstract

This MEd thesis is the first to explore PEI schooling experiences from the perspectives of Generation Queer (Wells, 2012). Deploying various tools of Foucault (1983), I suggest research participants – two out youth and their mothers - demonstrated “practices of freedom” to challenge the pedagogical and relational negation they encountered in hetero-centric schooling environments. To illustrate today being “a day like every other, or much more a day which is never like another” (p. 359), I position 1965 as yesterday and conduct two brief genealogies of criminal, medico-legal and socio-cultural discourses pertaining to sexual orientation. These genealogies identify both developments and stagnations in thought with regards to categorizations of sex, gender and desire. I then compare and contrast participants’ reports of schooling experiences with findings from contemporary North American school climate research (Grace & Wells, 2009; Kosciw et al., 2012; Taylor et al., 2011). I conclude by suggesting that the relationships being forged by and amongst Generation Queer represent useful examples for all those legislators, policy-makers, educators, parents and students committed to realizing the goal that all students feel free to be who they are at school (McGuinty, 2011).

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCING AND FRAMING THE RESEARCH

What strikes me is the fact that, in our society, art has become something that is related only to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something which is specialized or done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life?

(Foucault, 1985, p. 261)

This exploration of schooling, genders and sexualities is partially inspired by Kris Wells' (2008) article *Generation Queer: Sexual Minority Youth and Canadian Schools*¹. In his article Wells wrote of the emerging "newfound voice and visibility to sexual and gender minority youth issues in Canadian schools. . . [and how] often with the full support of their families these youth challenge the pedagogy of negation they had experienced in their formal educational environments" (p. 1). Being from Prince Edward Island (PEI) and having a frame of reference on sexualities, gender and schooling from the 1970's and early-1980's, I recall being governed by two unwritten yet seemingly all-powerful rules. First, claiming of non-heterosexual identifications occurred well after high school and, second, non-heterosexual identifications were most often claimed from the safety of 'away'². The disparity between my shame-based recollections of closeted schooling and those Wells (2012) describes as a "new generation of queer youth who have the knowledge, support and confidence to speak out . . . and demand their civil rights are not only protected but also respected" (p.1) provided the following research

¹ Since updated and re-named as Wells (2012) *Generation Queer: Sexual and Gender Minority Youth in Canadian Schools*. Found in the *ATA Magazine* of the Alberta Teacher's Association. Where appropriate, I cite the updated article throughout the remainder of this paper.

² The term 'away' to PEI residents encompasses everywhere but PEI.

direction: Who are these vocal and visible sexual and gender minority³ Canadian youth and their fully supportive families? How does their newfound voice sound and how does their newfound visibility appear? What is meant by their experiencing pedagogical negation within formal educational environments? How do they characterize challenging pedagogical negation? Finally, how would I theorize pedagogical negation and the ensuing challenges?

I am aware of this being the first master of education thesis in the Faculty of Education at the University of Prince Edward Island (UPEI) to consider discourses surrounding sexualities, genders and schooling from the perspective of out students and their parents. As such, I first needed to confirm whether Generation Queer and their fully supportive families now populate PEI schools. If so, could I document their recent schooling experiences and perceptions of challenging pedagogical negation? Upon posing these last questions to representatives of the Abegweit Rainbow Coalition of PEI (ARCPEI)⁴ and Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays PEI (PFLAGPEI)⁵, neither of which existed until the 1990's, I received identical affirmative responses. Connecting the dumbfounded manner of these responses to the ease with which I secured research participation of two 2009 high school graduates, Katie and Ryan, and their mothers, Arlene and Brenda, evokes Savin-Williams' (2005) admonition that "we can't know about these adolescents' lives by looking at the experiences of their older gay brothers and sisters" (p. 14).

³ From this point forward I replace 'sexual and gender minority youth' with 'queer youth'.

⁴ Founded in 1996, the Abegweit Rainbow Collective of PEI (ARCPEI) (2009) remains the only organization providing support services to members of PEI's queer community.

⁵ Since 1996, Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays PEI (PFLAGPEI) has been the local branch of PFLAG Canada (2009): "the national charitable organization, founded by parents who wished to help themselves and their family members understand and accept their non-heterosexual children" (p. 1).

While acknowledging that PEI-based research exploring schooling experiences of queer-identified youth and their supportive parents could not have been conducted during the 1970's and early-1980's, I can now confirm that this research is more easily undertaken today. As noted by Savin-Williams (2005), "the rapidity of the cultural makeover since the birth of the modern gay era⁶ has been nothing short of astonishing" (p. 17). Cloud (2005) suggests an especially telling indicator of this astonishing cultural makeover is that "kids are disclosing their homosexuality with unprecedented regularity – and doing so much younger" (p. 1). Extending this cultural makeover into public schooling, Wells (2012) posits that the average coming-out age of "15 or 16 ... squarely places sexual and gender minority youth issues in today's classrooms" (p. 1). So perhaps then the best support for my newfound understanding of PEI youth embodying Generation Queer is to now introduce Ryan and Katie through their respective coming-out stories. Though these stories suggest that gender and sexuality matter a lot in some PEI schools, they also suggest how gender and sexuality do not matter in some PEI families and friendships.

Ryan

Mid-way through eighth grade at age fourteen, Ryan

... basically exploded out of the closet. I was just so excited that everything about me

became like over-the-top super gay. Every conversation I had was about being gay and I

⁶ From McLeod (1996d): June 28 and 29, 1969 "mark the symbolic beginning of the modern gay liberation movement . . . [when] hundreds of gay street people and drag queens fought back after a routine police raid on a Greenwich Village gay bar at 53 Christopher Street called the Stonewall Inn. Four policemen were injured; thirteen people were arrested" (p. 43). To coincide with the anniversary of the Stonewall riots, Gay Pride parades occur world-wide the final weekend of each June.

basically doubled my being a flamer⁷. I was too excited to concentrate in class so I continued doing terribly in school until grade nine, that's when I got over myself and buckled down academically. Though most students didn't have a problem with my coming out, some students from further out in the country did.... But most of my peers liked me better because they knew I was hiding something. After I came-out they saw the real me which made it easier for them to open up with me. As for my Mom, I was super lucky to be in such a safe zone at home. . . . she is so accepting that sometimes I think she is gayer than I am (laughs). You see I have a lot of friends who aren't that safe at home⁸ so it was a really good thing to feel so safe with her. (Ryan)

Katie

At age fifteen towards the end of ninth grade and in perhaps a more methodical fashion, Katie first started coming-out

to some of my close friends, not even to my family. Eventually I came out to my aunt while she was waxing my eyebrows because I was going to this dance. She asked me if there would be any cute boys there and I said that I don't know because I like girls.

Without a thought she was immediately supportive and really encouraged me to tell my mom. So I did tell my mom and she too was totally supportive. After coming out to my mom I felt like I could finally breathe again. Until then I had totally thought the worst...

⁷ 'flamer' (n.d.) is defined as "a blatantly obvious homosexual person. [A descriptor] primarily and originally for males".

⁸ Ryan recounted the story of his friend, Malcolm, who "basically got disowned after coming out to his macho soldier father. That side of his family won't even acknowledge him now when they see him on the street ... it is really, really sad for Malcolm".

like she's not going to love me, she will kick me out of the house, she will no longer think of me as her daughter. I thought for sure that I would get backlash, especially because I live in a place like PEI. But my friends and family were so there for me that in many ways coming-out felt like it was just too good or too easy. (Katie)

The similar positive coming-out experiences of Ryan and Katie address both the importance and unpredictability of family support for queer youth. Whether before, during, after or, for that matter, irrespective of coming-out, Wells (2012) specifies that "supportive familial relationships are arguably the most important resiliency factors in the lives of all youth, especially sexual and gender minority youth who may need support in buffering the adverse effects of discrimination and prejudice" (p. 1). As indicated by Ryan and feared by Katie, however, 'safe zones at home' or sanctuaries from discrimination and prejudice are far from guaranteed for all queer youth. Characterizing the unique double-bind confronting queer youth, Goldfried and Goldfried (2001) wrote that they

represent a marginalized segment of our society whose parents [almost always] do not share their minority status. Consequently, they are confronted with the additional challenge of not only being stigmatized by society at large but also the prospect of being an outcast in their own homes. (p. 684)

Research data compiled by Pope and Wayman (2007) adds credence to this double-bind hypothesis. Confirming the disproportionate⁹ percentage of queer youth amongst homeless youth

⁹ From Pope and Wayman (2007): "A conservative estimate would be that one out of every five (20 percent) of homeless youth are LGBTQ or twice the number of the general youth population. Thus, LGBTQ youth are disproportionately experiencing homelessness" (p. 2).

populations throughout North America, they write that “a significant minority of LGBTQ youth report being thrown out of their homes due to their sexual orientation or gender identity” (p. 2).

In the final report of the first-ever Canada-wide survey on homophobia, biphobia and transphobia¹⁰ in Canadian schools, *Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere* (EGALE) simultaneously implicate parents and school personnel in casting out youth from homes and schools, respectively. Characterizing their shared motivation, Taylor et al. (2011) indicated

some school authorities and some parents tacitly approve of homophobia as an efficient technology for making children turn out heterosexual. Sadly, some parents are so terrified of their kids turning out gay that they would rather see them unhappy than see them unheterosexual. (p. 11)

I now introduce Katie’s mother, Arlene, and Ryan’s mother, Brenda, to illuminate my certainty that neither all parents nor all school personnel support homophobia or prefer kids be anyone other than who they are.

Arlene

Indicating both her own sense of feeling outcast by the school system and personal familiarity with queer youth on PEI becoming outcasts in their own homes, Katie’s mom, Arlene knew there was something up with Katie since grade six or seven but I just couldn’t nail it down. She had become so sullen and withdrawn. Her grades kept falling and she

¹⁰ From EGale Canada’s MyGSA.ca (2012): *Homophobia* is the fear and/or hatred, and/or repulsion of homosexuality in oneself or in others, often exhibited by self-hatred, prejudice, discrimination, bullying or acts of violence; *Biphobia* is the “fear or intolerance toward bisexuality, either from straight people or institutions or from within the gay and lesbian community; and, *transphobia* is the “unreasoning hatred and suspicion or fear of anyone whose gender identity and gender expression does not conform to society’s expectations for one of her/his biological sex.” (<http://mygsa.ca/content/terms-concepts>).

especially struggled with math. . . . so I pushed the school really hard for a learning assessment referral. They said that because of a three-year waiting list there was no sense in making the referral and they didn't . . . the school system was so frustrating and, to my mind, let us both down. Anyways, so I struggled to come up with the money for a private psychologist and it may have been a result of having come out to him that late in junior high school she finally came out to me. Given some family history I was super concerned about depression so when she did open up with me I was so relieved and was like 'Oh thank god that's all it is!' I told her 'you're the same little girl I gave birth to and that's never gonna change no matter what, so just go do your thing and know that I'm in your corner'. You see Katie has a family that is very, very supportive of her . . . something all kids don't have. Once Katie confronted coming out to the family, she never had to doubt our support. . . it breaks my heart to say that not all kids are so fortunate. I know of parents right here on PEI who still feel justified telling their kid 'you can tell me anything, just don't tell me you're gay'? I hope this research helps combat those kinds of tragedies . . . parents must not be afraid to challenge their own thinking and up-bringing whenever it gets in the way of raising well-adjusted, happy and confident kids. (Arlene)

Brenda

Speaking to the complexity of familial challenges which confront queer youth as they are coming-out to family members, Ryan's mom, Brenda, recalled not being able to forget the phone call from

Ryan's junior high school guidance counsellor telling me Ryan was experiencing distress.

Ryan wanted us to meet with him the next day so he could share what was up. While it

really troubled me that my child couldn't share something with me just one-on-one, I realized later that the guidance counsellor was giving me plenty of hints and tips on what was going on. So later that day when Ryan and I were together at home I asked if he wanted to talk about what was up and he said “No, wait until tomorrow with the guidance counsellor.” He did allow me to guess about what was going on though, thinking I’d never guess, right? So I said are you gay? Well how did you know? That was the first response out of his mouth! . . . So I give him a big hug, tell him I love him and assure him everything will be OK. The next day we go meet with the guidance counselor and Ryan discloses he wasn't worried about my acceptance but was worried about my Catholic family rejecting both of us because of his sexuality . . . After helping us deal with that, the guidance counsellor provided me with information to connect us with PFLAGPEI...at that meeting and throughout Ryan’s two years at that school, we couldn’t have asked for a better support system. (Brenda)

Having established that during their respective coming-out processes both Ryan and Katie experienced support from families, friends and, in Ryan’s case, school staff, provides an important yet partial point of departure for characterizing the newfound voice and visibility of Generation Queer within PEI junior high schools. Beyond not being outcast from their homes because of their sexual minority status and/or nonconformity to gender role expectations and well beyond experiencing mere tolerance, Ryan and Katie learned of being as entitled as their siblings¹¹ to unconditional support within their respective homes and families.

¹¹ Ryan and Katie each have one sibling.

A Socio-political Framework of Sexualities, Genders and Public Schooling

Integrating, comparing and contextualizing Katie's and Ryan's sexual minority status and subversion of gender role expectations with some Canadian school personnel supporting homophobia (Taylor et al., 2011), I ask: Could, would or should Katie and Ryan feel equally entitled as any other student to unconditional support within their respective schools? Rephrasing this question employing language from the *Philosophy of Education and Basic Principles* of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) (2009a), I ask: Were queer-identified Katie and Ryan as entitled as other students to being respected for their intrinsic individual value? Furthermore, from their perspectives as queer-identified students, how, if at all, were fundamental principles of The Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Constitution Act, 1982) and PEI *Human Rights Act* (2013) applied, promoted and "embodied by example and through the programs and materials used in schools" (DEECD, 2009a, p. 1)?

To make this contextual leap in the thesis, I deploy DEECD-produced documents which attest to PEI's educational system embodying The *Charter* and PEI *Human Rights Act*. I do so in order to conceptualize the pedagogical negation of Generation Queer and their supportive families as suggested by findings from large-scale North American school climate research (Taylor et al., 2011; Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen & Palmer, 2012). This juxtaposition of school climate research findings with espoused adherence to political documents by political

departments (i.e. DEECD) reinforces my understanding of public education as a socio-political¹² institution. If Winston Churchill was correct in that history is written by the victors, is not public education also a contested site whereby dominant social groups represent norms as knowledge? Indeed, this politicization of knowledge and norms are a main thread of examination throughout this thesis.

Cannella (1999) critiqued contemporary characterizations of school-age students “as the ultimate ‘other’ than the adult – those who must have their decisions made for them because they are not yet mature [and] those who must gain knowledge legitimized by those who are older and wiser . . .” (p. 36). However widely circulated, recognized and accepted is the notion of children depending upon adults, I remain motivated to ask such socio-political-themed questions as: How have we as a society come to invest age with wisdom? How are children dispossessed of wisdom by virtue of their age? As adult experts choose the legitimized knowledge and social behaviours to be reproduced, consumed or acquired by dependent, immature children, what knowledge and social behaviours do these same adult experts deem illegitimate, unintelligible, not worth knowing or excludable? Furthermore, how does youthful reproduction and regurgitation of already legitimized knowledge and social behaviours inevitably contribute to maturity?

To connect this socio-political understanding of education to my research on sexual identity, gender and schooling I deploy a three-step process. First, I incorporate an argument put forth by Grace and Wells (2009) that “schooling has historically been about preserving the status

¹² I use this term given the fusion of social and political factors throughout public education (i.e. public education in Canada is the responsibility of elected provincial governments; the *Charter* and *Act* codify social rights and responsibilities; and, school climate research explores social conditions within schools).

quo and tradition, which in regard to sex, sexuality and gender means assuming the exclusive morality of heterosexuality and the limited ontology of two biological sexes as cultural imperatives” (p. 29). Second, I adopt positions suggested by Rubin (1992) that “sex is always political” (p. 143) and that “for over a century, no tactic for stirring up erotic hysteria has been as reliable as the appeal to protect children” (p. 146). Combining these works and words, melding the legitimization or normalization of heterosexual superiority by wise adults with time-tested ploys to ferment moral panics in defence of youthful innocence¹³, helps conceptualize the contemporary socio-political context of education. I then highlight specific experiences of Katie, Ryan, Arlene and Brenda, the third and final step, to situate this socio-political understanding of pedagogical negation based on sexualities and genders within the real world of PEI public schooling.

Katie: Experiencing pedagogical negation

Consider this example of Katie recollecting the excitement she and her soon to graduate from Junior High School (JHS) classmates felt as they prepared for an overnight trip in grade nine when I wasn’t even out yet. We had random room assignments and I didn’t really know my two roommates. The two of them spread throughout school that they didn’t want to room with me because I would probably try to rape them... that was the stupid, rude assumption they were spreading – and not just about me but about all gay people – and it made me feel bad about myself. The girls then went to school administration and said they shouldn’t have to room with me. So the

¹³ Youthful innocence being exclusively synonymous with young people identifying as heterosexual.

administration allowed them a room of their own and chose to reassign me. That was how the administration handled the situation. (Hilton, 2013, p. 185)

When asked about the trip itself, Katie stated that

with the way the administration supported those girls and allowed them to behave and think about me I just couldn't enjoy myself on that trip. Imagine if I had spread around school that I shouldn't have to room with someone because they're Asian or because they're black or because they're in a wheelchair? The school would never have allowed it, they would have addressed it and they might not even have allowed me to go on the trip. Somehow the nightmare that what was happening to me was different thoughTo me it just once again proved that either Junior High School (JHS) teachers just don't have a clue or they just don't have any interest in really handling situations that have to do with sexuality. (Katie)

In this instance and at this particular JHS on PEI in the spring of 2006, therefore, I suggest the socio-political underpinnings of pedagogical negation resemble misinformed adults legitimizing heterosexism¹⁴. Specifically, negation resulted from adults fueling moral panics by enabling the belief that queers molest youth, a belief deemed by Campos (2005) as “one of the most circulated stereotypes about gay and lesbian persons” (p. 122). As a result of adults rewarding those who circulated fears of being raped by queer-perceived Katie, I include

¹⁴ Consistent with Grace and Wells' (2009) “...exclusive morality of heterosexuality” (p. 143), Herek (1990) defines *heterosexism* “as an ideological system that denies, denigrates, and stigmatizes any non-heterosexual form of behavior, identity, relationship or community” (p. 333). Heterosexism functions through “rendering homosexuality invisible and, when this fails, by trivializing, repressing or stigmatizing it” (p. 333).

dehumanization amongst disappointment, disenchantment and distancing as the real-world effects of heterosexist reproduction.

Katie: Challenging Negation Through Practices of Freedom

I now offer a theoretical basis for the challenges to pedagogical negation posed by Generation Queer and their supportive families. I stay with the example of school administrators reinforcing the stereotype that queers molest youth to point out that however dehumanizing its immediate effect, Katie did not succumb to defeat. Whereas earlier she “avoided confrontation of any kind having to do with my sexuality because I allowed the way people thought about me and their opinions of me to impact how I viewed myself,” following this school trip Katie vowed that

high school would not be a repeat of how difficult junior high was . . . it prompted me to finally come out to my family . . . what a weight off my shoulders that was. I decided to no longer worry about what others thought about my sexuality I made their thoughts their business, not mine . . . In all honesty, during the three years of high school I never experienced anything negative towards my sexual orientation. (Hilton, 2013, p. 188)

I highlight this specific excerpt from my interview with Katie to first reveal important changes in her thinking regarding legitimized norms of gender and sexuality. Identifying Katie’s changed responses which resulted from her changed thinking enables a return to those questions posed in the opening quote by French philosopher Michel Foucault (1985): “Couldn’t everyone’s life become a work or art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life?” (p. 261). For Foucault, thought is central to “creating ourselves as a work of art” (p. 262). Not so much thought as in ‘I think I will eat breakfast this morning’, but rather what Foucault (1984b) framed as the work of thought or

what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and to question it to its meanings, its conditions, and its goals.

Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem. (p. 117)

I suggest that through active engagement with her thinking, Katie challenged the pedagogical negation which resulted from adults in school rewarding students who represented her as dangerous. I contend Katie demonstrated the work of thought by first stepping back to reflect upon her thinking which then allowed internalized heterosexism¹⁵ to emerge as the problem to be questioned. In a nutshell, the work of thought allowed Katie to think, do and be otherwise than before. I connect practices of freedom to Katie's ongoing questioning, risk-taking and experimentation with her "relationship of the self to itself and the relationship to the other" (Foucault, 1984a, p. 300). In this and other instances, I characterize participants' challenges to pedagogical negation as participants' practices of freedom. Understanding freedom as perpetual exercise or endless activity allows positioning pedagogical negation as a problem to be addressed through the ongoing work of thought.

Finally, placing practices of freedom at the heart of this research exploration encourages consideration of this particular challenge issued by Foucault (1982a), a challenge illustrated but not solely constituted by Generation Queer and their supportive families:

If what we want to do is create a new way of life, then the question of individual rights is not pertinent We live in a relational world that institutions have considerably

¹⁵ Per Szymanski et al. (2008), *internalized heterosexism* is the self-hatred which inevitably results from societal stigmatization of same-sex behavior (i.e. romantic, emotional and/or sexual).

impoverished. Society and the institutions which frame it have limited the possibility of relationships because a rich relational world would be very complex to manage. We should fight against the impoverishment of the relational fabric. (p. 158)

Exposing how Ryan, Katie, Brenda and Arlene, supportive family members, friends, school teachers and administrators created relationships in spite of damaging stereotypes, moves this research from being an exposition of existing socio-political limits to a research which explores the ethical possibilities of and for supportive relationships for out gay youth within contemporary public education.

Queer as an Identity Label

If we are asked to relate to the question of identity, it must be an identity to our unique selves. But the relationships we have to have with ourselves are not ones of identity; rather, they must be relationships of differentiation, of creation, of innovation. To be the same is really boring. We must not exclude identity if people find their pleasure through this identity, but we must not think of this identity as an ethical universal rule.

(Foucault, 1982b, p. 166)

In the upcoming section I introduce the topics of both AIDS and post-structuralism to situate the 1990's as when queer emerged debuted as an identity label. I position identity, like practices of freedom, as an ongoing process of unknown creation and submit to the work of thought any and all self-evident conceptualizations of identity labels. I exemplify sex segregated sporting competitions as sites of subjective exclusion, whereby cultural norms are deployed to draw definitive lines between who is and is not eligible to compete as a female athlete. I reference Judith Butler's (1999) "heterosexual matrix" to help frame the limitations to thought

which emerge when cultural norms become synonymous with knowledge. Though challenges to norms will and do provoke resistance, I nonetheless conclude that Generation Queer is at work practicing freedom here on PEI, exposing the inherent limits of established identity categories and, through enriching the relational fabric, creating art.

So who or what is this Generation Queer I aim to explore and why do I use an identity label which teachers might disallow in their classrooms? Consistent with the socio-political nature of this work, Campos (2005) wrote of queer coming to “symbolize the GLBTTQ community’s strength and pride” (p. 109). “We’re here. We’re queer. Get used to it.” This defiant, affirming chant of collective identification by 1990’s activist organization Queer Nation, emerging from hesitant societal and political responses to the AIDS pandemic, represents the best known contemporary usage of queer (Stryker, 2004). When used as a noun or, following Britzman (1995), when representing an “actor” (p. 153), queer is a convenient umbrella term for individuals identifying as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirited, Questioning and Ally (GLBTTQA). Queer has been reclaimed, defanged, embraced, and resignified¹⁶ by those it was once, and is still, intended to disparage (Gamson, 1995; Lipkin, 2008). Given its pejorative historical context, however, queer remains a controversial identity marker, in particular for older generations (Mule, 2006).

¹⁶ Vaid (1996) cites George Chauncey’s (1994) *Gay New York; Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male, 1890-1940* which historicized the regular appearance and usage of the term queer to the 1910s-1920s. It is worth noting that the descriptor queer was adopted at that time by middle-class homosexuals seeking to differentiate themselves from lower-class, more flamboyant ‘fairies’. Given this added contextualization, it may be more accurate from our contemporary perspective to indicate queer “being re-reclaimed, re-defanged, re-embraced, and re-resignified.”

Jagose (1996) situated the emergence of queer as an identity label within poststructuralist re-conceptualizations of identity from possessing “undeniable realness” (p. 78) to identity as a “sustaining and persistent cultural fantasy or myth” (p. 78). Given its enmeshment within an impoverished relational fabric, Foucault suspected identity for imposing pre-determined boundaries upon people which limit their creative capacity (O’Farrell, 2005). Questioning the attachment of truth claims to fixed identity categories, Sedgwick (1990) argued that:

people are different from each other . . . and even people who share all or most of our own positioning along these crude axes (gender, race, class, nationality, sexual orientation) may still be different enough from us, and from each other, to seem like all but different species. (p. 22)

Butler (1999) took up this line of thinking to question the “assumption that the term *women* describes a common identity. . . . Indeed, the fragmentation within feminism and the paradoxical opposition to feminism from ‘women’ whom feminism claims to represent, suggest the necessary limits of identity politics” (pp. 6-7). Who, what, where, why and how are women? Are there definitive, universal and ahistorical answers to questions of this sort? Suggesting there are no easy answers and acknowledging the “constraints that grammar imposes upon thought, indeed upon the thinkable itself, [Butler asked] what can be meant by ‘identity’ then, and what grounds the presumption that identities are self-identical, persisting through time as the same, unified and internally coherent?” (p. 22). For instance, are all homosexuals identical? In an interview with Michalik (2001), Butler contested the notion of a “proper gay or lesbian identity” (p. 1). Given similar arguments by Sumara and Davis (1999) of it “becoming increasingly clear that what constitutes experiences of heterosexuality are incredibly varied” (p. 193), how is a

heterosexual to be definitively known? If we agree with Sedgwick on heterogeneity existing within groups and homogeneity across groups, are not all identity labels (i.e. gay, lesbian, straight¹⁷, Aboriginal, disabled, Christian, etc...), like woman and women for Butler (1999), “troublesome terms, sites of contest and causes for anxiety?” (p. 6)

Understanding identity positions as troublesome and contested is how I interpret Talburt (2006) “assuming beforehand a certain queerness to ‘everything’”(p. 92) when recommending queer as a descriptor for “gesturing toward less predictable identities and practices” (p. 87) than do gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender. Wells (2012) suggests that today’s youth reflect modern sensibilities, ascribe queerness to everything and express “reluctance to have their identities categorized into neat boxes . . . [by] preferring queer as an identity marker to lesbian, gay, or bisexual” (p. 20). The inability of language to capture, define or represent, framed by Butler (1999) as “the insistent ambiguity and openness of linguistic and cultural signification” (p. 51), encourages my defaulting, like Gamson (1995), to the “made-up yet necessary nature” (p. 390) of queer over other similarly fictitious identity labels. While appreciating the useful purpose of nouns and adjectives for exploring, recounting and making sense of human experience, I also appreciate that people are neither things nor one-dimensional. In this research then I employ queer as a noun, adjective or identity label, because to my mind it is the noun, adjective or identity label that most resembles a verb.

Returning to Jagose (1996), verbs or actions are central to my understanding identity as “a process rather than a property . . . [that is] ongoing, and always incomplete” (p. 79). Similar to

¹⁷ From Katz (1996): Straight was a term first introduced by homosexuals as in “to go straight is to cease homosexual practices and to indulge –usually to re-indulge- in heterosexuality” (p. 45).

the earlier reviewed concepts of ‘work of thought’ and ‘practices of freedom’, therefore, I understand identity as perpetual and ongoing construction, destruction and restructuring of the self, expressed differently at different times in one’s different relationships. Neither uncovering an already existing true self nor limiting oneself to already known identity positions, identity as a process embraces fluidity, uncertainty and multiplicity of the self in relation to both itself and others. Viewed through this dynamic lens, identity situates the ‘still to be known’ at the centre of one’s relationships and, ultimately, illustrates the living of one’s life as a work of art.

I therefore position queer as a verb or, following Britzman (1995), as representing “action” (p. 153). Given the legitimization of essentialized, fixed conceptualizations of identity categories, Wilchins (2004) espoused queering or exposing Western-style thought practices as “dominated by an essentially dishonest quest for what is universal and certain” (p. 42). Likewise for Grace and Wells (2009), to queer is to “redeploy, twist, and challenge the stable, intact, and unitary categories that have historically marked essentialized notions of lesbian and gay” (p. 25). To ascribe identity positions with universality, certainty or essentialism¹⁸ implies having first ascribed truth to language. For instance, what undeniable essence does language reveal of the identity category ‘sex’ and how has this essence become undeniable? Redeploying Butler (1999), “what is ‘sex’ anyway? Is it natural, anatomical, chromosomal or hormonal and how ... [do we] assess the scientific discourses which purport to establish such ‘facts’ for us” (p. 10)?

¹⁸ *Essentialism* (n.d.) is “the practice of regarding something (as a presumed human trait) as having innate existence or universal validity rather than as being a social, ideological or intellectual construct” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/essentialism>).

A recent and scientific-sounding International Olympic Committee (IOC) (2012) policy on “female hyperandrogenism”¹⁹ provides a contemporary example for questioning both the undeniable essence of sex and the legitimization by experts of sex being taken for granted as either male or female. Adopted just before the London 2012 Olympic Games (OG), the policy was designed in part to respond to the 2009 800-meter world championship performance of 18 year-old Caster Semenya of South Africa. Characterized by ESPN (2012) as possessing a “husky voice, masculine face and physique” (p. 1) and ostracized by fellow competitors’ expressing views that “these kind of people should not run with us” (Clarey & Kolata, 2009, p. 1), Semenya endured an 11 month suspension from competition pending the 2010 confirmation of her eligibility to compete as a female. The new IOC policy, applicable only to sporting events segregating males and females (practically all events), acknowledges “human biology, however, allows for intermediate levels between the conventional categories of male and female, sometimes referred to as intersex” (IOC, 2012, p. 1). According to the policy, “usually, intersex athletes can be placed in the male or female group on the basis of their legal sex²⁰” (ibid). Usually, of course, is not always. Subsequently, the policy regulations “identify circumstances in which a particular athlete will not be eligible (by reason of hormonal characteristics) to compete in 2012 OG competitions in the female category” (ibid). While careful to note that “nothing in these regulations is intended to make any determination of sex” (ibid), the IOC nonetheless

¹⁹ Yildiz (2006) defines *hyperandrogenism* as an excess of androgens (male sex hormones) and represents the condition as “a common endocrine disorder of women of reproductive age, with a prevalence of 5-10%” (p. 167) .

²⁰ Interestingly, *The Concise Dictionary of Law*, Martin (1986), does not contain the term ‘sex’. Review of the listed term ‘sex change’, however, indicates that “sex is determined at birth” (p. 337). For present purposes legal sex is considered the birth certificate assignation of being either male or female.

allows for disqualifying certain females from female competitions on the basis of their “having [naturally occurring] female hyperandrogenism” (p. 3).

Sex: The impossible quandary?

A member of the IOC Advisory Panel responsible for crafting the new policy, Dr. Eric Vilain (2012), defended both the policy and panel members on the basis of their being “faced with an impossible quandary: a socially imposed sex division in sports (allowing half of the world’s population to have a chance at winning) with no clear objective way to draw a line between male and female” (p. 1). Framing the policy as “a step in the right direction ... [though] certainly imperfect” (ibid), Dr. Vilain positioned testosterone quantity “as a pretty good candidate” for determining female eligibility since “there is practically no overlap between normal male and female ranges” (ibid). Given the ambivalent language that Dr. Vilain employs to support his very own policy, it is not surprising that opposing viewpoints proliferated.

Convinced neither of the intentions behind nor of the need for the IOC policy, Kevin Wamsley, a professor of sports history at The University of Western Ontario, argued in Macur (2012) that “no matter what they call it, it’s still a sex test that’s all about judgements and so much more about social values than science” (p. 1). In agreement with Wamsley and dismissive of the IOC’s alleged motivation to ensure fair competition, Rebecca Jordan-Young (2012) professor of women’s, gender and sexuality studies at Columbia University, framed the new policy as but another example of “misperception and bias against people who are not gender-conforming” (p. 1).

So the simple answer to the not-so-simple question of the facts of sex is that it depends upon who you ask. From the perspective of IOC medical science experts, the facts of sex should

be understood as neither essential nor objective but rather as imperfect judgements predicated upon conventional and normalized assignments of testosterone to males and masculinity. While social researchers agree that the facts of sex are messy, this messiness promotes their questioning reliance on cultural norms and conventions. As summarized by Jordan-Young (2012), since “scientifically, there is no clear or objective way to draw a bright line between male and female it is time to stop pawning this fundamentally social question off onto scientists” (p. 1). Like the institution of public schooling, sex is a socio-political concept!

The heterosexual matrix: All that need and ought be known?

A related and relevant instance of normalization, whereby socio-political categories attain taken for granted status to produce culturally intelligible subjects²¹, is what Butler (1999) coined as the “heterosexual matrix” (p. 151). This matrix connects the oppositional certainty of sex as either male or female to the corresponding certainty of males expressing masculinity and females expressing femininity to produce the singular certainty of desire: the “compulsory practice of heterosexuality” (p. 151). While some view its’ reliance upon conventional or normalized understandings of sex, gender and desire as ‘dishonest quest’, ‘cultural fantasy’ or ‘impossible quandary’, for others the heterosexual matrix represents all that needs and ought be known. Consider, for example, this concluding statement from the U.S. school climate report for Human Rights Watch (HWR) by Boechenek and Brown (2001):

²¹ From Lloyd (2007): “*Cultural intelligibility*, as Butler deploys it, refers to the production of a normative framework that conditions who can be recognized as a legitimate subject.... [which] ties the idea of *cultural intelligibility* to the possibility of a livable life (that is, a life that is recognized as having value and legitimacy).... [As to those outside this normative framework], they simply will not matter” (p. 33).

The entrenched societal prejudice against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth is based on rigidly enforced rules dictating how girls and boys should look, walk, talk, dress, act, think and feel. The social regime in most schools is unforgiving. Youth who break these rules will be punished. (p. 261)

Connecting this HRW school climate report to both the IOC policy on female hyperandrogenism and Katie's school trip experience suggests that whether from students, parents, school administrators or from the wider culture in which we all exist, the queering of identity categories provokes resistance. From 'these kind of people should not run with us' to 'we should not be forced to share our room with a lesbian rapist', punishment of unintelligible bodies remains a useful basis for characterizing contemporary socio-political reality within public schools and throughout the wider culture. In fact such a useful characterization that I could question the degree to which today is different from my closeted reality of 1980's schooling on PEI. But then I think again about Caster Semenya bearing the South African flag and leading her teammates into Olympic Stadium during the opening ceremonies in 2012. I think back to Katie at age fourteen turning her nightmare of a school trip into self-acceptance and coming out to Arlene, supportive friends and other family members. Finally, I think ahead to the upcoming examples of so-called immature youth educating so-called wise adults on sexuality, gender, relationships and schooling. All this work of thought leads me to conclude that Generation Queer is indeed here and, beyond "getting used to it", some are embracing it wholeheartedly.

Outline of Thesis

To provide a map for the reader I will outline the way in which I have chosen to present this thesis. In Chapter Two I introduce the qualitative methodologies employed to approach the topic of schooling from the perspectives of two out queer youth and their supportive parents. In Chapter Three I conduct a genealogical analysis in order to situate the modern-day gay rights movement and my own story within the civil and women's rights movements of the 1960's. I extend the genealogical analysis into Chapter Four and review psychiatric and judicial developments which contributed to incremental recognition of queer Canadians within Canada's legitimized relational fabric. I contrast these incremental developments with both past and present examples of PEI legislators enacting legislation to undermine the inherent dignity and equality of queer Islanders and their relationships.

In Chapter Five I provide a synthesis of North American school climate research. I explore JHS-related stories provided by research participants to situate findings from my smaller-scale conversations within these larger-scale research endeavours. I contrast factors thought to promote queer youth resilience in hostile schooling environments with ongoing efforts of Ontario Catholic school system leaders to frame queer youth inclusion as an unconstitutional attack on religious liberty. In Chapter Six I discuss research participants' experiences of high school (HS). I explore instances of both Katie and Ryan experiencing inclusion within the relational fabric of the high schools they attended and graduated from together. I also explore an experience of HS unique to Ryan which suggests that relational fabric exclusion still limits access to educational opportunities for out queer youth. Evoking Michel Foucault (1982c), I contrast continued privileging of heterosexual relationships against "... the intransigence of

freedom” (p. 790) to suggest that Generation Queer represents an ethical response in the ongoing struggle against an impoverished relational fabric. I contend that public education leaders receive many clues for addressing the uncomfortable fact that unethical schooling practices produce undesirable schooling outcomes. As throughout the thesis I pose unanswered questions, I conclude this outline section by evoking Foucault to ask: Being that they reflect the very principles which schooling purports to promote, why or how would any school leader resist embracing practices of freedom as exhibited by Generation Queer?

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGIES

This chapter summarizes both why and how I inquire into the schooling experiences of two out queer youth and their mothers on PEI. Assuming our shared commitment to identifying and removing barriers which prevent student engagement with schooling, I outline my approaches to the research and introduce works by various educational researchers who suggest impoverished relational fabrics predict negative schooling outcomes for queer youth. I highlight adults' responsibility for contributing to this undesirable scenario and question whether many fail in their duty to care for all students. To support my prioritizing this question, I first detail the methods employed to obtain and approach research participants and then feature the theoretical basis for documenting their reports of schooling experiences. I acknowledge that exploring a small sample of research participants produces but a partial, preliminary understanding of how genders and sexualities impact schooling experiences. As such, I position this research as a first step towards identifying, addressing and overcoming any and all barriers which prevent student engagement with schooling. However, I contend that my genealogical work contributes to the contextual positioning of the interviews and the understanding of practices of freedom of queer youth, in general.

In order to now introduce the focus, purpose, significance, general questions and limitations which frame this research I first recount another story about JHS experiences that Katie shared during our interviews. This story encapsulates how knee-jerk interventions by adults in schools may inadvertently sustain the very relational fabric impoverishments known to promote student disengagement from learning. As I assume with confidence that promoting

student disengagement would contradict the ethical motivations of most school teachers and administrators, I represent the research as a much needed introductory foray into the topic of PEI public education from the heretofore missing perspectives of out queer youth and their supportive parents.

In grade nine there was this big huge deal about my sexual orientation. A friend, [Monique²²], who stuck up for me because I was gay was taken by an administrator out of her gym class to a room and asked ‘Are you gay?’ She said ‘No’. The administrator then asked her ‘Well is Katie gay? Can I talk with her about her sexual orientation?’ Monique said ‘No, you can’t. It’s none of your business.’ I became so frightened that the administrator was going to pull me into a room to question my sexual orientation. I don’t know what I would have said because I wasn’t close to being comfortable with it at the time. (Hilton, 2013, p. 184)

I know what I would have said and thought had a JHS administrator taken me out of a grade nine class in 1979 and questioned my sexual orientation: I would have lied profusely, experienced silent mortification that my secret was out and then hoped to God that somehow word would not get back to my family, friends, coach, and teammates. But thankfully this did not happen to me then, nor can I imagine it happened to anyone else at my JHS in the 1970’s. I can easily imagine, however, my then JHS peers questioning the sexual orientation of anyone associating with gender non-conforming youth. I can imagine this because in the 1970’s I myself thought, like some of Katie’s peers and even her JHS administrator seemed to think nine years

²² Pseudonym

ago, that the only associates of gays and lesbians were other gays and lesbians. I now understand the complete inadequacy of my then limited thinking on the relational fabric, just as I understand the reliance upon stereotypes as demonstrated by Katie's peers just a few short years ago. I remember the pressure to fit in and the need for others to consider me normal just as Katie recalls JHS being "difficult and awkward for everyone though, everyone trying to figure where they fit and stuff like that. People in JHS liked to pick each other apart for being different and for not being what is considered normal."

It is the school administrator's decision to escalate the situation by interrogating Monique and attempting to interrogate Katie that I problematize. Why would a 21st century school administrator choose to investigate allegations of non-heterosexuality rather than challenge the deficient, albeit familiar, stereotype that anyone who befriends perceived or identified queer youth must themselves be queer (Lipkin, 1999)? Do stereotypes continue to define how today's students and even today's school administrators think about our relational fabric? Does Katie's experience exemplify what Foucault (1982b) meant by societal institutions (i.e. schooling) "limiting the possibility of relationships because a rich relational world would be very complex to manage" (p. 158)? What ethical considerations surround adult role models in schools contributing to the perpetuation of stereotypes? What about the pedagogical worth of stereotypes, how does their deployment contribute to the learning and schooling of youth? Finally, how and why in any PEI school today should any school administrator care about any answer to the question "are you gay?"

Research Focus

My project focuses on the schooling experiences of openly queer youth and families as instances of fostering connectedness to or distancing from school. My interest in this topic stems from my own closeted school experience of the early 1980's. While being closeted was neither a unique story then nor now (Campos, 2005; Hansen, 2007; Savin-Williams, 2001), I am intrigued by the implications of openly queer youths' presence in PEI schools today. Echoing Dewey's (1929) belief that "the school is primarily a social institution . . . that must represent present life" (pp. 164-65), I accept my 1980's closeted self very well represented life of that era. As only closeted queer youth attended my school it is reasonable to assert this present research could not have even been contemplated at that time.

Savin-Williams' (2005) already noted "astonishment at . . . the rapidity of the cultural makeover since the birth of the modern gay era" (p. 17), however, provides far greater research potential for considering the contemporary socialization role for schools and schooling (Dewey, 1929). A significant indicator of this cultural makeover is the increasingly younger ages at which youth claim non-heterosexual identities, whether understood as queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (Cloud, 2005; Wells, 2012). Changes to criminal justice system discourses (reviewed later in this chapter) and developments in medical, legal and public school system discourses (reviewed in chapters three and four) are all implicated in this cultural makeover. The pervasiveness of queer characters and queer representations throughout today's popular culture (i.e. *Ellen*, *Will and Grace*, *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *Queer as Folk*, *The L Word*, *Glee*, *The New Normal* and *Modern Family*) also informs my understanding of schooling's present context. Again following Savin-Williams (2005):

The success of the entertainment industry in presenting and hence normalizing same-sex desire has had an incalculable impact on the ability of adolescents to understand their own emerging sexual attractions. (p. 18)

Notwithstanding such cultural developments and increased research portraying queer youth as typical adolescents confronting typical adolescent issues (Campos, 2005; Savin-Williams, 2005), recent school climate research paints schools as hostile sites for openly queer youth and those perceived to be queer (Grossman, Haney, Edwards, Alessi, Ardon & Howell, 2009; Kosciw, Diaz, & Greytak, 2008; Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen & Palmer, 2012; Taylor et al., 2011). How then do openly queer youth and their families navigate this ambivalent schooling landscape?

Research Purpose

In this thesis I explore instances of connectedness to (Hansen, 2007) and/ or distancing from (Grossman et al., 2009) the public schooling experience from the perspectives of two out queer youths and their mothers. This research problematizes the declared mission of the PEI English Language School Board²³ (ELSB) (2011a) to “provide a healthy, safe and supportive learning and working environment for students and staff” (p. 1). I likewise problematize PEI Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) (2009a) references to PEI public schools “demonstrating respect and support for fundamental human rights as identified in the Canadian *Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Charter)* and the PEI *Human Rights Act*” (p. 1). However, the PEI *School Act* (2013) includes only one reference to The *Charter*

²³ In 2013 the Eastern School District and Western School Board merged into the English Language School Board.

concerning students “receiving French first language instruction in the province” (p. 1). In addition, there are no references to inclusion or inclusive education in the PEI *School Act*. Circulating participants’ perspectives of educational experiences, policies and practices as instances fostering either connectedness to or distancing from school adds context for educators and policy-makers committed to actualizing the laudable missions of providing students a learning milieu which brings out their individual best in a caring and safe environment.

Research Significance

The primary significance of this research involves introducing the voices of queer youth and their parents to the accumulated body of local educational research on this topic. As characterized by Reilly (2007), “traditionally, queer people’s existence in educational settings have been denied or made invisible, not just physically (in school hallways and classrooms, etc.) but also in terms of discourse, curricular representation, and policy design” (p. 121). Invisibility of the sort posited by Reilly likewise characterizes PEI-based research on sexualities and schooling. Given that no PEI school district chose to participate in the controlled conditions component of research on homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in Canadian schools²⁴ (Taylor et al., 2011), I frame this research as adding the experiences and opinions of two out queer PEI youth and their mothers to begin exploring this void. The inclusion of parental voice in this research provides added research significance as queer youth often simultaneously face social stigmatization in schools and homes (Ryan, Huebner, Diaz & Sanchez, 2009; Goldfried &

²⁴ From personal email correspondence, EGALÉ’s Alex Duffy (2012) wrote that “in terms of PEI schools, I can’t at this point do a thorough check of the origins of all our responses, but I can say that no Boards in PEI participated in the survey. That said, there was representation from all Canadian regions, meaning that individual responses were received from PEI”.

Goldfried, 2001). I expose and explore the narratives provided in two supportive, nurturing familial environments on PEI so as to demonstrate that family life can be other than glum for queer youth. Finally, the historical and genealogical work further contributes context and meaning to schooling for queer youth and the specific practices of freedom demonstrated by Katie, Ryan, Arlene and Brenda.

Framework and General Research Questions

This exploration of local schooling experience from the perspectives of queer youth and families is informed by these general research questions:

- 1) What does supportive schooling for out queer youth look like on PEI?

Following Foucault,

- 2) How does work of thought characterize the relational fabric existing in schools on PEI?
- 3) How do Generation Queer and their supportive families use practices of freedom to challenge pedagogical negation?

To guide my understanding of the philosophical and policy underpinnings of PEI public schooling I rely upon such policy documents as the *Philosophy of Education and Basic Principles* (DEECD, 2009a), *Mission Statement and Beliefs* (ELSB, 2005), *Caring Places to Learn/Safe Schools Environment* (ELSB, 2011a) and *Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights in Learning* (ELSB, 2011b). These policies variously promise that public education on PEI will promote “instruction on naming, discussing, thinking critically about, challenging and preventing all forms of bias, stereotypes, harassment and discrimination” (p. 2). I contrast such policy promises with recent findings from large-scale North-American

school climate research representing all grade school levels and diverse population samples (Grossman et al., 2009; Kosciw et al., 2010, 2012; Taylor et al., 2011). Finally and guided by Michel Foucault, I provide a brief genealogy, or historical overview, of criminal, medical, and societal conceptualizations of homosexuality. All of this historical and genealogical work of my thesis provides interpretive context to the voices of research participants.

Limitations of the Research

I now address two significant and interrelated limitations of this research. One obvious limitation is the use of two identity-based categories, out queer youth and parents of out queer youth, in research problematizing such identity categorizations. Reiterating both Gamson (1995) on the “made up yet necessary nature” (p. 390) of such descriptors and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s (1990) axiom “that people are different from each other” (p. 22), I assume heterogeneity within both categories and, as such, stake no claim beyond researching perspectives of participants themselves. The continued necessity for identity-based categorizations, however, reflects ongoing stratification of identity positions. It is more this hierarchical nature of identity categorizations and less identity *per se* that I wish to explore. Nonetheless, including identity-based categories in this research requires I also acknowledge identities, voices, and perspectives excluded from and thus limiting the proposed research. As schooling is central to my proposed exploration, I hope future research in this area includes perspectives of other schooling stake-holders (i.e. teachers, administrators, politicians and/or teacher trainers). The inclusion of varied non-queer voices and perspectives would also balance and enrich the research but I decided that depth was important in this research. As these limitations suggest, the small sample size serves primarily as a starting-point for PEI-based

educational research on schools, genders and sexualities. As clarified in the upcoming sections, I frame this research as a long overdue invitation to a thoughtful dialogue more characterized by questions than answers. I offer genealogical and historical context as an interpretive jumping off point for the questions posed.

Qualitative Methods

I employed a qualitative design to explore schooling experiences from the perspectives of two out queer youth and their mothers. More specifically and in order to understand how sexual and gender diversity connects to contemporary schooling experiences, I included elements of critical and collective case study, autoethnography and genealogy. Before providing a brief description of each of these methodological elements, I summarily characterize this qualitative and genealogical research design by first quoting Foucault (1971) from a debate with Noam Chomsky:

It seems to me that the real political task in a society such as ours is to criticise the workings of institutions, which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticise and attack them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight against them. (p. 49)

This research and the educational experiences and practices it describes are political so I first represent the methodology as a critical case-study of two out queer youth and their parents. Creswell (2008) frames critical research as that “in which the author is interested in advocating for the emancipation of groups marginalized in our society” (p. 478). The educational marginalization of queer-identified and/or queer-allied youth is that which I am critical of and, ultimately, seek to change. As critical researchers often “celebrate” (p. 478) their own

subjectivity, I hereby highlight my personal standpoint, informed by Kinsey (1948), that diversity best characterizes the fields of sex, sexuality and gender.

I also represent the research as a collective case study (Stake, 2005). Examining the schooling experiences of the purposively sampled participants will enrich our understanding of the “phenomenon” (p. 445) of both institutionalized heterosexism and practices of freedom which could then deepen understanding “of a still larger collection of cases” (p. 446). I stress this methodological potential as out queer youth, albeit the focus of this project, represent but a small visible segment of the many students constrained by what Lipkin (1995) characterizes as the “narrowness and rigidity” (p. 36) of normalized heterosexuality.

I likewise represent the research as having some autoethnographic elements. Patton (2002) wrote that autoethnographers use their “own experiences to garner insights into the larger culture or subculture of which they are a part” (p. 86). As such, I share personal experiences which range from growing up on PEI, attending college in Maine and coming out in the distant safety of San Francisco before then coming out to family on PEI prior to my 30th birthday. When positioned against the contemporary stories and experiences of Katie and Ryan, this autoethnographic element contributes to the genealogical approach of Foucault (1983) which emphasizes today being “a day like every other, or much more, a day which is never like another” (p. 359).

In my genealogical analysis I first introduce Foucault’s conceptualizations of power relations and then his representation of the body as “the inscribed surface of events” (p. 375). I re-visit instances of pedagogical negation experienced by both Katie and her friend Monique to connect these methodological concepts and to develop a partial understanding of “what today is”

in PEI schools from the perspective of queer youth. I position 1965 as ‘yesterday’ within this research by connecting US civil and Canadian women’s rights movements to the subsequent emergence of the North American gay rights movement. In Chapter Three I also explore the story of Everett George Klippert, Canada’s last imprisoned homosexual, to give broader context to the genealogical analysis and interpretation of the present.

Participant selection

Field research for this study was conducted on PEI during November and December of 2009. The study’s design includes five participants reflecting upon personal experiences of public schooling. Two of the participants are students who graduated in 2009 from the PEI public education system. Two participants are their mothers. These mother/youth pairs were purposively selected in coordination with “gatekeepers” (Creswell, 2008, p. 487) representing PFLAGPEI and ARCPEI. PFLAGPEI is the local chapter of PFLAG Canada (2009) “the national charitable organization, founded by parents who wished to help themselves and their family members understand and accept their non-heterosexual children” (p. 1). ARCPEI is a community-based organization providing support services to PEI’s GLBTQ community (ARCPEI, 2009). The coordination between PFLAGPEI and ARCPEI facilitated the participation of two student/parents pairings who were willing to be involved in interviews. I count myself as the fifth research participant as I present a brief autoethnography at the end of Chapter Three and by way of providing interpretive depth.

Researchers role, ethics and informed consent

Upon obtaining approval from UPEI Research Ethics Board (REB) to proceed with the research, a letter of introduction (Appendix A) which included relevant personal beliefs was sent

to gatekeepers to invite and engage participants. In the letter, I highlighted my concurring with Macgillivray (2000) that “all students deserve social justice, equal representation, and developmental support into adulthood from schools” (p. 303). Furthermore, I emphasized Kozik-Rosabal’s (2000) belief that parents “only want to know that the schools where their children go will protect them and provide the best learning environment possible” (p. 369). I then sent an information letter to potential research participants (Appendix B). Having secured access to participants, I obtained informed consent from each individual (Appendix C). Following Patton’s (2002) “ethical issues checklist” (p. 408), I incorporated the following features into the informed consent process: understandable explanation of research purpose, reciprocity, risk assessment, confidentiality, and data access and ownership.

Participant self-disclosure

The specific ethical consideration of participant confidentiality warrants further elaboration. As participants preferred “owning their own stories” (p. 411) I allowed for identity disclosure with voluntary choice in the use of the real first names of the young people and their mothers. Following Creswell (2008), each participant account was “member-checked” (p. 267) during second interviews and throughout the writing process. I used member-checking opportunities to: address the accuracy of the data compiled from the interviews, obtain feedback from participants on any and all interpretations and re-address issues of disclosure versus confidentiality. Though all participants continued selecting the self-disclosure option, based on

the member-checking process I did revise and, in some instances, remove²⁵ interpretations of the data. The revisions involved correcting both time-lines and identities of involved parties. For instance, Ryan corrected the point at which he came-out from the start to the middle of eighth grade and Katie corrected job titles of the people involved in the stories she recounted. Revisions of this sort were of minimal practical significance as I made concerted effort to not identify specific people by their specific position. In this research, for example, a principal becomes an administrator just as I list an English teacher as a teacher. On a small island it is very easy to identify individuals and special care is required in terms of protecting identity.

Data collection methods

I conducted two one-on-one interviews with each of the four participants. The initial interviews each took sixty to seventy-five minutes and employed a combination strategy of standardized open-ended questions (Appendices D & E) which provided latitude to pursue emergent topics (Patton, 2002). This design “flexibility” (p. 347) allowed for exploration of unforeseen topics during the course of interviews. An audio tape recorder was used during each interview and I made field notes immediately upon interview completion. Typical of the critical researcher role (Fontana & Frey, 2005), I employed empathetic interviewing techniques throughout by taking “an ethical stance in favour of the individual or group being studied” (p. 696). I emphasized research participants being as entitled as any other student or any other parent to both the benefits and responsibilities of public schooling.

²⁵ There was data that participants’ requested I exclude from any write-up of their interviews. I honoured any such request.

I maintained accuracy and increased familiarity with the data by personally transcribing audio-recordings. The second interview took no more than sixty minutes and served important member-checking functions (Creswell, 2008). Prior to the second interviews participants received “drafts of the write-up revealing how they are presented, quoted and interpreted” (Stake, 2005, p. 459). Following Clandinin and Connelly (2000), during second interviews I obtained feedback on the accuracy of my initial write-up and posed such follow-up questions as: Do you see yourself in this write-up? Is this how you wish to be seen when others read this story? Each participant provided positive feedback on both my interpretations and the direction in which I was taking the research. As stated by Arlene upon reading the first major draft of this work, “I feel like I’m reliving the whole of Katie’s schooling and that something really positive may finally come from our sharing some very difficult experiences”.

Data management

Transcripts of initial interviews and a working copy of accumulated data were maintained on a password protected computer. Copies of all transcripts were distributed to participants. Two additional copies of transcripts were made and all originals and copies of materials (informed consents, tapes, transcripts, and field notes) remained locked in my thesis supervisor’s on-campus file cabinet for the five year period following completion of the work. All data will be shredded at the end of this five-year period. Audio tape recordings were destroyed immediately upon participants’ accepting the accuracy of transcriptions and interpretations.

Data analysis and interpretation strategies

The stage was set for data analysis as soon as data collection began. Following Patton (2002), I immediately compiled post-interview field notes that reflected on the setting and

interview observations in order to “establish a context for interpreting and making sense of the interview later” (p. 384). All such interpretations were “clearly marked as emergent” (p. 384) and continuously reviewed upon accumulating additional field notes and throughout the data analysis process. I heeded Creswell (2008) and reviewed completed transcripts several times before beginning the “general process of developing a description, analyzing data for themes, and providing an interpretation of the meaning of [my] information” (p. 489). I employed a “lean coding” (p. 252) technique and assigned relatively few codes during initial read-through of the data. Elaborated codes emerged upon subsequent data reviews and specific attention was paid to consolidating similar codes while diminishing code redundancy. Codes emerged from each of the individual participant case studies and were compared and contrasted through cross-case participant analysis (Stake, 2005).

Important data themes emerged from this coding process that formed the basis for interpretations. The reviewed school climate literature sensitized without wholly determining my coding and theme building process. For example, Grossman et al.’s (2009) “distancing themselves from school” (p. 24) may or may not have emerged from participant interviews as a significant theme but its presence or absence became significant given its thematic centrality within existing literature. This inductive process of allowing themes and interpretations to primarily emerge from the actual data came from member-checking interviews with participants and ongoing consultations with faculty supervisors.

Trustworthiness

Rigorous and collaborative data-analysis took place with participants and faculty supervisors and contributed to the authenticity and reasonableness of reporting within this

research (Patton, 2002). Special attention was given to tracing references to original sources and to describing the socio-cultural context from which the research and interpretations emanate. Employing Creswell (2008), eventual interpretations are positioned as tentative, reflecting my decisions as “only one possibility [of many]” (p. 485). My unabashed advocacy for greater consideration of how sexual and gender diversity issues impair schooling outcomes in and/or experiences of PEI schools requires that I provide ongoing explication of personal biases and positions throughout the research. I aim to enhance credibility with readers by consistently distinguishing my voice and politics from those of participants.

Time line of the research

On September 4th, 2009 I submitted my proposed research to the UPEI Research Ethics Board (REB). I received REB approval in October 2009. In November 2009 I contacted gatekeepers to ask for support in locating participants. Once participants were identified and understood the nature of the research, I secured informed consents and completed all initial interviews by the end of December 2009. Interview transcription and initial data analysis occurred between November 2009 and February 2010. Follow-up interviews and member-checking of participants were completed by June 2010. Between June 2010 and June 2011 I took time off from this research and focused instead on paid employment. In August 2011 I used the research data to prepare and submit a chapter to a peer-reviewed publication for consideration as part of an upcoming book on the marginalization of youth in Canadian schools. The chapter, titled *Still Sleeping in the ‘Gay Tent’?: Queer Youth in Canadian Schools*, was accepted in December 2011 and the book, *Youth, Education and Marginality: Local and Global Expressions* (Tilleczek & Ferguson, 2013), was published in 2013. I finished writing the historical and

genealogical pieces in November 2011. Upon member-checking with research participants in December 2011, I submitted the first draft of this research to my faculty supervisors. I again prioritized paid employment from February 2012 until October 2012. In June 2012 co-supervisor Dr. Khym Goslin retired and Dr. Kate Tillezcek assumed his duties at that time. I subsequently submitted the final draft of this research to my supervisors in January 2014. Dr. Fiona Walton supervised my work and this process from the outset.

CHAPTER THREE: BRIEF GENEALOGY OF CIVIL, WOMEN'S AND GAY RIGHTS

We must ask ourselves the question, What is today? In relation to the Kantian question, “What is Enlightenment?” one can say that it is the task of philosophy to explain what today is and what we are today, but without breast-beating drama and theatricality and maintaining that this moment is the greatest damnation or daybreak of the rising sun. No, it is a day like every other, or much more, a day which is never like another.

(Michel Foucault, 1983, p. 359)

In this chapter I introduce my understanding of the genealogical approach as employed by Michel Foucault. O’Farrell (2007) suggests that “the examination of the situation of people existing on the margins of society is one of the mainstays of Foucault's work” (Key Concepts). I submit, therefore, that having already introduced two instances whereby Katie experienced marginalization in JHS on account of her perceived sexuality, Foucault and his work represent a natural fit with this project on the schooling experiences of two out queer youth and their mothers on PEI. In *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*, Foucault (1978) defines genealogy as “the analysis of power relations and their technologies” (p. 4). Connecting genealogical analysis to the body in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1979) wrote that “the body is also directly involved in the political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs” (p. 25).

I use those technologies, techniques or tools of pedagogical practice deployed by Katie’s JHS administrators as points of departure for illustrating both genealogical analysis and its

connection to the body. Appeasing students unwilling to sleep in the same room as Katie because of her perceived lesbianism, interrogating the sexuality of Katie's friend for being Katie's friend and attempting to interrogate Katie's sexuality because of gender non-conformity as judged by her peers, these three examples of administrator interventions each demonstrating how heterosexual privilege was reinforced at this particular PEI school through gossip, rumor, scandal and unchallenged stereotypes (Rofes, 2005). Having chosen to segregate the body of queer-perceived Katie by altering only her room assignment and having chosen to interrogate only the body of queer-allied Monique by pulling her from gym class, administrators communicated to the entire school community that bodies and relationships of heterosexuals mattered and that bodies and relationships of queers and their allies did not (Butler, 1999).

It is important that we recall Katie decided to come out to family and friends and Monique resisted interrogation upon encountering school administrator attempts to assert heterosexual domination. I stress that domination provokes resistance and practices of freedom because Foucault (1981) himself stressed that genealogical analysis "must take into account not only techniques of domination but also techniques of the self" (p. 177). Addressing both this perpetual struggle between domination and freedom and its enactment upon bodies throughout the social body, Foucault (1988) asserts that power "takes place when there is a relation between two free subjects, and this relation is unbalanced, so that one can act upon the other, and the other is acted upon, or allows himself to be acted upon" (p. 11). Despite having already characterized these specific examples of pedagogical practice by Katie's JHS school administrators as pedagogical negation (Wells, 2012), I nonetheless assert that school

administrator interventions upon both the bodies and friendship of Katie and Monique failed in the end to determine, direct or normalize the relational fabric. As recalled by Katie,

that summer between JHS and before going to High School I went to my first *PridePEI* parade. My friends came with me because I was so scared and nervous and they knew I wouldn't go if I had to go by myself. Despite all the crap in JHS, they just didn't care if people thought they were gay because they were there with me. They said 'you are our friend and we want to support you and we want you to be comfortable with yourself'.

Though denying Katie unfettered access to learning opportunities, though attaching an aura of suspicion to her friendships and though teaching students that her body and those of her friends did not matter, school administrator interventions did not negate the practices of freedom by Monique and Katie. I connect their intransigent practices of freedom to this provocative encapsulation of genealogical analysis provided by Foucault in an interview with Becker (1984a):

I refuse to reply to the question I am sometimes asked: "But if power is everywhere there is no freedom." I answer that if there are relations of power in every social field, this is because there is freedom everywhere. (p. 292)

Armed with this very partial understanding of "what today is" and sensitive to there being freedom everywhere, I revisit Foucault (1983) to problematize today being "a day like every other, or much more, a day which is never like another" (p. 359). O'Farrell (2005), offering a succinct translation of Foucault's genealogical approach, whittles it down to our asking the simple question "how is today different than yesterday" (p. 139)? Adapting this question to this project I ask: "How is schooling today different from schooling yesterday with regards to sex,

sexuality and gender?” To begin addressing this question requires I first clarify what is meant by “yesterday” within this research. For the most part throughout this project 1965 is defined as the symbolic beginning of yesterday. I chose this date because the 1960’s produced new social movements which challenged the existing social ordering of bodies and re-conceptualized the relational fabric. I now identify four events which occurred in 1965 to substantiate its positioning as “yesterday” in this project.

1965: Civil rights

First, during a March 15, 1965 speech to a joint session of The United States Congress encouraging passage of The *Voting Rights Act* (1965), US President Lyndon B. Johnson (1965) problematized racism as neither a Negro, Southern nor Northern problem but “only an American problem Because it's not just Negroes, but really it's all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice” (para. 19). The existing relational fabric to which Johnson spoke had earlier erupted with the exposure of techniques long employed throughout the South to disenfranchise black citizens (Library of Congress, 2010). On March 7, 1965 millions of prime time television viewers witnessed white Alabama state troopers deploying attack dogs, batons, tear gas, and bullets against non-violent, primarily African American, demonstrators marching from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. Incontrovertible images from “the event soon known as ‘Bloody Sunday’” (para. 4) of peaceful men, women and children risking bones, bodies and lives for arguably the most fundamental of democratic rights, the right to vote, produced widespread effect. Secret tactics of racism were secret no more and Americans of all colours, sizes, shapes and backgrounds united in outrage to demand action from government leaders. Feeling the political heat, President Johnson pursued then passed his historic legislation.

Finally and importantly, leaders of other burgeoning rights movements became inspired to forge connections amongst and between themselves and their causes. As Kinsman (1987) relates, “it was in the context of revolts by blacks, young people and women [in the 1960’s] that lesbians and gay men rebelled” (p. 179). Given their shared context, I now connect sexism and then heterosexism to the impoverished relational fabric stemming from racism.

1965: Women’s rights

The Canadian women’s rights movement provides a second basis for positioning 1965 as ‘yesterday.’ A review of Library and Archives Canada (2008) indicates that in October 1965 Judy LaMarsh, Canada’s second²⁶ female federal cabinet minister, first introduced to cabinet the need for a national review of the barriers preventing the full and equal participation of women in Canadian society. The request from LaMarsh generated little support as “the Prime Minister did not respond because the press in Canada was very negative to the idea” (para. 5). Frustrated with the political calculations of Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson and finding tactical inspiration in the American civil rights movement, women’s rights organizers issued “the veiled threat of a women’s march on Ottawa” (para.12) to provoke governmental action. The threat worked.

In February 1967, Prime Minister Pearson established The Royal Commission on the Status of Women “to inquire into and report upon the status of women in Canada, and to recommend what steps might be taken by the Federal Government to ensure for women equal opportunities with men in all aspects of Canadian society” (para. 1). Whereas in 1965 Pearson

²⁶ Despite Caucasian Canadian women having voted and run in federal elections since the *Dominion Election Act* of 1920, it took until 1957 for Canada’s first female federal cabinet minister to be appointed. Ellen Fairclough, Conservative MP for Hamilton West (ON), served Prime Minister John Deifenbaker as Secretary of State (1957-58), Citizenship Minister (1958-62) and Postmaster General (1962-63).

chose to avoid controversy, maintain status quo sex roles rather than resist problematizing “the factors which prevent women from participating fully in the economic, educational, political and social life of Canada” (para. 7), the Prime Minister reversed course when challenged in 1967 by a more cohesive and assertive women’s movement. The shifting calculation of controversy Pearson attached to problematizing patriarchal reproduction meant that continuing to cite tradition as the basis for inaction was no longer workable (O’Farrell, 2005).

I position these 1965 events as milestones within the movements of racial and sexual equality while remaining cognizant that racism and sexism persist to this day. Such present day examples as Barack Obama’s two term presidency of the United States or a record five²⁷ of ten provincial and one of three territorial Premiers in Canada being female in 2013 might suggest that we are experiencing a post-racial and post-sexual present. Such historic events could be interpreted as confirming the achievement of equal access to voting for African Americans or to political opportunities for Canadian women. Yet contemporaneous efforts in many American states to legislate new voting requirements of disproportionate impact on racial minorities (Horwitz, 2012) and continued underrepresentation of Canadian women in the House of Commons (24.7%), provincial/territorial legislatures (23.6%) and on municipal councils (23.4%) (Cool, 2011) suggest equality as we understand it today retains remnants of a racist and sexist past. Having combined past and present examples of both racialized voting restrictions and sexualized political representation, I assert that the status-quo technique of avoiding social

²⁷ From Economist Reporter (2013): With the January 26, 2013 selection of Kathleen Wynne as both Liberal party leader, Premier of Ontario and “Canada’s first openly gay provincial premier, ... women are now in charge of six of Canada’s 13 provinces and territories, including the four biggest by population (Quebec, British Columbia and Alberta, as well as Ontario)” (paras. 1-2).

controversy continues to sustain an impoverished relational fabric. I now connect this assertion and these equality movements to both the birth of the modern gay rights movement and this contemporary research on sex, gender, sexuality and public schooling. In making these connections I remain attuned to Foucault's (1983) contention of today being "a day like every other . . . [yet] never like another"(p. 359).

1965: Canada's last convicted homosexual

To illustrate this connection I provide two final instances which informed my situating 1965 as yesterday. On August 16, 1965 in the course of investigating an unresolved arson, Pine Point, Northwest Territories RCMP officers brought in Everett George Klippert for questioning. Known by police to possess a prior criminal record for gross indecency²⁸, Klippert had moved to the north from Calgary upon his 1963 release from prison to help alleviate "the feeling of his continued presence bringing shame on his family" (*Klippert v the Queen*, 1967, p. 828). While the RCMP's intense questioning cleared Klippert of involvement in the arson, officers expanded the investigation to extract from Klippert a confession on his recent sexual exploits. Without assistance from legal counsel and, according to Allen (2012), "told [by RCMP officers] that unless he pleaded guilty to homosexuality he would be charged with arson" (p. 1), Klippert admitted that since taking up residence in Pine Point he engaged in sex with men on four

²⁸ From Copley (2008): Since being added in 1890 to the Criminal Code of Canada, the meaning of gross indecency has been by design difficult to define. Justice Minister Sir John Thompson, the bill's author and "father of our criminal law" (para. 2) stressed that a statute pertaining to acts of gross immorality "which are offensive to the people, and set a bad example ... needed to be vague ... [so as to] criminalize any act of desire, affection or romance between men, rather than outlawing a specific act" (para. 13). Kinsman (2003) indicates that sex acts between women did not merit Criminal Code attention "until the 1950's ... [when] the offence of gross indecency is expanded to include lesbian sexual acts; prior to this the very possibility of lesbian sex tends to be denied in the law" (para. 11). Simultaneously, undefined heterosexual acts also became criminalized under gross indecency legislation (Kinsman, 1987).

occasions. McLeod (1996a) suggested that on the basis of this “voluntary statement” (p. 20) officers charged Klippert with and, on August 24, 1965, a NWT Territorial Court Magistrate convicted him of “four counts of gross indecency involving non-violent acts with consenting adult males in private” (p. 20). Sentenced to three years on each count to run concurrently, Klippert’s second conviction for gross indecency automatically entered him into sentencing guidelines of the *Dangerous Sexual Offender Act* (1960) which led to his eventual entrance into Canadian history books.

In 1966 and in large part based on expert psychiatric²⁹ testimony that Klippert was and would likely at liberty remain a person who engaged in non-violent consensual sex with men (*Klippert v The Queen*, 1967), Klippert received a dangerous sexual offender designation and was sentenced to preventive detention or “incarceration for life” (p. 831) in federal penitentiary. When announcing the lifetime sentence that guidelines mandated he impose upon Klippert, Justice Sissons spoke beyond the courtroom walls to Canada and Canadians: “I think the penitentiary term is going to do the accused considerable harm and will not help him and will not help the public” (McLeod, 1996b, p. 4). As half of Canadians shared³⁰ Sissons’ obvious ambivalence about confining Klippert to life imprisonment, the harsh inflexibility of the mandatory sentencing guidelines “sparked public discussion and parliamentary debate” (Niwerobisz, Searl & Theroux, 2008, p. 5). The once taboo topics of homosexuals and homosexuality had become suitable subjects for polite conversation.

²⁹ At the time of Klippert’s trial in 1966, the Diagnostic and Statistics Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM I) of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) classified homosexuality as a ‘sociopathic personality disturbance.’

³⁰ Rothon (2006) cites a 1969 Gallup poll indicating that Canadians were split on the question of criminalizing *all* homosexual activity (41 percent for and 42 percent against continued criminalization).

More conversations erupted in 1967 upon Klippert appealing his designation as a dangerous sexual offender to the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC). McLeod (1996c) indicated widespread media coverage of Klippert's appeal ensured it "becoming one of the most important criminal cases in Canadian history to deal with the matter of gay sexuality" (p. 20). In *Klippert v. The Queen* (1967), a divided SCC rejected Klippert's appeal in a 3-2 ruling. In its' ruling, the majority affirmed that the *Dangerous Sexual Offender Act* reflected the clear intent of Parliament to equate homosexuals thought "likely to commit a further sexual offence" (p. 836) of homosexuality with perpetrators of sexual violence with. In his majority opinion, Justice Fauteux reminded Canadians of his hands being tied and that whether or not the law "should be changed . . . is obviously not for us to say; our jurisdiction is to interpret and apply laws validly enacted" (p. 836).

Chief Justice Cartwright disagreed with the decision and authored the court's dissenting opinion. Cartwright argued there existed no legal justification for interpreting the *Dangerous Sexual Offender Act* so "that the words 'dangerous sexual offender' shall include in their meaning 'a sexual offender who is not dangerous'" (p. 831). Predicting upcoming legislative developments, Cartwright wrote that

it is not wholesome that the existing criminal law should not be enforced. A law which ought not to be enforced should be repealed. If the law on this subject matter is as interpreted by the Courts below, it means that every man in Canada who indulges in sexual misconduct of the sort forbidden by s. 149 [acts of gross indecency] of the Criminal Code with another consenting adult male and who appears likely, if at liberty, to continue such misconduct should be sentenced to preventive detention, that is to

incarceration for life. However loathsome conduct of the sort mentioned may appear to all *normal* [emphasis added] persons, I think it improbable that Parliament should have intended such a result. (p. 831)

Though unsuccessful in court, consigned to remain forever behind bars and shamed throughout even the dissenting opinion by Justice Cartwright in support of his appeal, Klippert and his lifetime detention generated controversy which prompted into action the minority Pearson government. Just six weeks after the SCC issued its ruling, Justice Minister P. E. Trudeau announced government introducing

the most extensive revision to the Criminal Code since the 1950s and, in terms of the subject matter it deals with, I feel that it has knocked down a lot of totems and overridden a lot of taboos and I feel in that sense it is new. It's bringing the laws of the land up to contemporary society I think. Take this thing on homosexuality. I think the view we take here is that there's no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation. I think that what's done in private between adults does not concern the Criminal Code. When it becomes public this is a different matter, or when it relates to minors this is a different matter. (CBC News, 2007, para. 2)

C-150: What did it do?

Kinsman (2003) cautions that since its passage in 1969 by then Prime Minister Trudeau, Bill C-150 or *The Criminal Law Amendment Act* has been “widely misunderstood as legalizing homosexual sex. [Though] it did nothing of the sort” (para. 13). Beyond decriminalizing the sale and use of contraception (Canadian Federation for Sexual Health, 2009), “some abortions under extremely restricted conditions” (p. 2) and gambling to “allow federal and provincial

governments to use the lottery in order to help fund worthy projects” (Rollins, 2011, p. 1), what did C-150 do specific to taboos surrounding homosexuality?

Given that it created the strictest age of sexual consent exemptions ever included in the Criminal Code of Canada by outlawing all same-sex erotic activity until age twenty-one or older, C-150 denied the very existence of adolescent same-sex desire. Pilon (1999) confirms “that except for the offences of buggery³¹ and gross indecency, the age of consent for sexual activity has at no time been set higher than 14 in Canada” (p. 3). Kinsman (2003) asserts that C-150’s significant distinction in age of consent for same sex erotic activities reinforced the prevailing “perception that young males apparently require extra protection from homosexual advances” (para. 17) than do young females from heterosexual advances.

Transcripts of the House of Commons debate³² preceding passage of C-150 provide abundant examples of the perceived need to protect innocent male youth from recruitment, exploitation and molestation by innately dangerous adult homosexuals. Consider the claims of Gerard Laprise, Member of Parliament (MP) for Abitibi, QB: “such sexual perverts are not satisfied with meeting other perverts; too often they try by every astute means available to pervert boys and sometimes, they kill or pervert. By legalizing homosexuality, such sexual perverts are given full liberty” (Hansard, 2009, para. 11). Martial Asselin, MP for Charlevoix,

³¹ From Group for Advancement of Psychiatry (GAP) (2007), “the term “buggery” (referring to Bulgaria) was originally used to slander heretical groups that were believed to originate from there” (para. 1). By the time it was imported from England to Canada in 1892, the crime of buggery had become synonymous with “sodomy”, “unnatural acts” and “crimes against nature” (GAP, 2007). In 1987 buggery was replaced by ‘anal intercourse’ in the Criminal Code of Canada.

³² Kinsman (1987) cites George Smith’s suggestion that “the record of this debate may be the most heterosexual document in Canadian governmental history” (p. 166).

QB, likewise declared “the minister knows quite well that, in general, homosexuals do not wait until they are attracted by persons of age Homosexuals are mostly inclined to pervert youngsters and the minister opens the door even wider” (para. 12). Similar sentiments were expressed by Walter Dinsdale, MP for Brandon-Souris, MB, who feared C-150 “bringing the morals and values of skid row into the salons and drawing rooms of the nation It is abnormal social behaviour, because homosexuals are predators Homosexuals prey on juveniles” (para. 17). Given the degree of moral panic which framed MPs knowledge of homosexuals and homosexuality and notwithstanding the restrictive age of consent for same sex erotic activities, how did C-150 ever pass into law by a lopsided vote of 149-55?

Kinsman (1987) suggests that the very structure of C-150 helped secure its’ lopsided passage. As a result of the “tactical terrain” (p. 167) established by the Liberals and New Democrats, MPs opposed to “either or both the homosexual and abortion provisions had to vote against the bill as a whole if they could not amend the bill to their liking” (p. 167). The widespread enthusiasm which then existed for the introduction of provincial and national lotteries, for example, complicated the voting process while providing cover to any lawmaker troubled by appearing to support an amendment seen as legitimizing reviled homosexuals. Don McLeod, Canadian lesbian and gay activist, offered this succinct perspective: “since it was lumped in with lotteries, it passed” (LaPierre, 2009, para. 104).

Appreciating the political perils of C-150, Justice Minister John Turner reassured and reminded wavering MPs

that there is nothing in the bill which would condone homosexuality, promote it, endorse it, advertise it, popularize it any way whatsoeverThose of us who support the bill

recognize that there are areas of private behaviour which, however repugnant, however immoral – if they do not directly involve public order should not properly be within the criminal law of Canada. (para. 19)

Relying upon a sickness model³³ which by then commanded bipartisan support (Kinsman, 1987), Turner deployed comfortable and familiar conceptualizations of homosexuality as “cause for psychiatric rather than legal intervention” (McLeod, 1996d, p. 41). Pushing the point that queers were sick, Turner also confirmed that C-150 “doesn’t even legalize this kind of [repugnant and immoral] conduct” (p. 41). Given that queers and their relationships remained confined by dehumanizing judgments of this sort, I return to my earlier problematization of what C-150 did relative to the taboo of homosexuality and contend it quarantined both homosexuals and homosexuality.

Kinsman (1987) asserted that the wording of C-150 ensured that debates surrounding “lesbian and gay concerns were reduced to narrow issues of criminal law reform” (p. 164). Consistent with a context of queers and queerness neither being affirmed positively nor publically (Kinsman, 2003), C-150 ignored everyday issues of gay and lesbian personhood. Overt discrimination in housing, employment, military service, healthcare, security clearance, education or parental rights, to name but a few, remained taboo topics and continued unabated. As cited in Kinsman (1987), George Smith argues that the newfound narrow private sphere of tolerated queer immorality relative to the broad public sphere encompassing everything but “two

³³ At the time of the House of Commons debate in 1969, the APA’s DSM II had reclassified homosexuals from ‘sociopaths’ to ‘sexual deviants’. However downgraded the new diagnosis, continued classification of homosexuals for deviating from established norms of sex/gender/desire justified medical professionals attempts to cure homosexuals of their disease through institutionalizations, treatments and counseling services (Hausman, 2004; Robertson, 2004).

[adult] individuals behind a locked door” (p. 170), had reduced queers and queerness to “a question of sex in public or sex in private” (p. 164). Where medical professionals gained responsibility for curing homosexuals of their privatized sickness, police and prosecutors “retained and extended” (p. 170) patrol and punishment campaigns. These high-profile campaigns contained queers and queerness and helped ensure the public realm remained normal, decent, natural and healthy or, in a word, heterosexual. The privatized, liberalized space of and for tolerance within C-150 was paradoxically achieved by reaffirming the rampant public intolerance of homosexuals and homosexuality. Addressing the inherent paradox of C-150, Perelle (2009) posits that

when Trudeau backed the state out of the bedrooms of the nation, he did so with the understanding that we should stay in our bedrooms and not display our sexuality beyond our front doors. Bill C-150 wasn't about liberating sexuality. It simply built a roomier wing onto the closet. (para. 5-6)

Paroling Klippert, positioning Katie for pedagogical negation

Make no mistake, this roomier closet did provide Canadians with tangible benefits. Collectively speaking, Canadian homosexuals engaging in same-sex erotic activities needed no longer fear being labeled as dangerous sexual offenders and spending lives behind bars (Lapierre, 2009). On an individual level it enabled the July 20, 1971 parole from Prince Albert maximum security Penitentiary of Everett George Klippert (McLeod, 1996d). Continuously incarcerated since August of 1965, C-150's roomier closet distinguished Klippert as “the last person in Canada to be arrested, charged, prosecuted, convicted and imprisoned for homosexuality” (Allen, 2012, para. 2). But with queers and queerness still singularly defined,

known or thought via approved discourses of pathology and predation, how did C-150's roomier closet enrich the existing relational fabric? I evoke Kinsman (1987) when fast-forwarding to Katie's class trip to Quebec in 2005 to illustrate the continuing relevance of C-150 to the relational fabric. I conclude that interventions by PEI school administrators to segregate or separate Katie legitimized, reproduced or perpetuated the 1969 message within C-150 of queers "being a special threat to young people" (p. 197).

1965: Great George Street

The roomier closet imagery from Perelle (2009) provides a nice characterization of the final past event which I use to situate 1965 as the symbolic beginning of yesterday. I was born just nine days after Klippert began what ended up being a six-year stint in prison for the crime of homosexuality. On Thursday September 2, 1965 in a Charlottetown Hospital delivery room I became the 8th in a family which would eventually count twelve children. Raised directly across from the St. Dunstan's Basilica on Great George Street, we were a 'good Catholic family' of six boys and six girls. Except for having no Alice, we Hiltons were double the number, trouble and fun of The Brady Bunch! Still years removed from making any sense of the roomier closet afforded by C-150, I begin my story by focusing upon institutional forces which restricted queerness and queers to the shadows, ensuring it and they remained unwelcomed in public.

Despite or because of these forces I knew first-hand there lived 'fruits'³⁴ in Charlottetown and I knew, too, where fruits stood in society. I did not know these things from having an out teacher, coach or adult role model because teachers, coaches and adult role models then came in

³⁴ Fruit is the term for gay I most recall using and hearing throughout the 1970's and early 1980's.

the straight variety or not at all. I knew these things because fruits and their frequent tormentors would at night parade the sidewalk beneath and circle the block outside my bedroom windows³⁵. Many were the weekend night my younger brother and I entertained ourselves to sleep by verbally insulting the fruits as they endlessly and seemingly unsuccessfully promenaded up, down and around the darkened block. I liked to think that our adolescent hijinks provided safe, amusing diversions from their existences, existences I calculated as sad, shady and, given the frequency with which I was awakened by passersby threatening physical harm, dangerous. But mostly I calculated such loud protestations might divert others from questioning my heterosexuality and my masculinity. I found it intolerable to think others might ask the very questions of or about me then consuming my internal attention.

Given my predicament I was soon resigned to living a compartmentalized life. I imagined performing ‘straight’ Tom in public and confining ‘other than straight’ Tom to a dark, private world of shame-filled desires and guilt-ridden sexual acts. I anticipated anonymity, fleetingness and opportunism would satisfactorily disconnect my private actions from a public role of traditional son and sibling, trusted friend and teammate and, eventually, respected husband and father. Just like George Klippert before me, I would protect my family from potential controversies by moving far away from Great George Street, Charlottetown and, for that matter, PEI. By graduation from Colonel Gray in June 1983 and without even knowing it, I had bought hook, line and sinker the closet which C-150 begrudgingly afforded queer Canadians. Not until

³⁵ In addition to living across from St. Dunstan’s Basilica I also lived across from the parking lot where by day sat automobiles of Legislative Assembly members which transformed by night into what was commonly referred to as the “gay parking lot”.

beginning Bowdoin College in Maine later that year did I encounter people who dared live otherwise.

Bowdoin College: A more complicated relational fabric

I recall the gay student group at Bowdoin being named ‘1 in 10’, a reference to Alfred Kinsey’s 1948 research findings that up to 10% of males could be classified by their sexual behaviors as predominantly homosexual (Kinsey Institute, 2009). Whatever the actual name, the group and its’ presence on campus blew my mind. Though never once throughout my four years at Bowdoin did I seriously consider joining, I at least now knew that people my age more than survived living life outside of the closet, they thrived in the light of day. The relational fabric which I understood to be fixed and permanent was becoming: less black and white, more complex; less rigid, more flexible; and, importantly, less about reproducing the already known, more about discovering unknown possibilities. I witnessed gay students being popular, athletic, intelligent, healthy, happy and loved by their families. I knew gay and straight students alike who had friends of diverse sexual orientations. I was beginning to understand that gayness was neither contagious nor social death sentence, at least that’s what I understood until arrival of the “gay plague” (Kinsman, 1987, p. 211).

The emergence and accompanying hysteria of AIDS as a worldwide public health issue resuscitated my earlier fears about the meaning and consequences of being gay. Reconnecting gayness with sickness in my mind was a no-brainer as AIDS equalled death and homosexuals were included amongst the dreaded 4Hs of AIDS (Haitians, hemophiliacs, heroin users and homosexuals), groups referred to by Thomas (1985) as “the new untouchables” (p. 1).

Disconfirming the connections I had only just begun making between possible outness and

normality, AIDS, by reconfiguring the playing field, reconfirmed my internal abnormality. From my newfound perspective the curse of homosexuality resided less within the minds of homosexuals and more within and throughout their now lethal bodies. Though the desire for same sex erotic activities had not diminished by my 1987 graduation from Bowdoin any emerging desire to integrate my public and private personas had been vanquished by AIDS. The grip of the closet had tightened given that the consequence of AIDS was so final and, as post-Bowdoin life unfolded, so horrifyingly visible on the sidewalks and streets of the city to which I was transferred by my new employer.

San Francisco: AIDS and MSMs³⁶ everywhere

I moved to San Francisco in February of 1988. Living so far away from PEI in a city often, and arguably, referred to as the ‘world’s gay capital’ presented countless opportunities and risks for questioning my commitment to and need for the closet. There were institutions, support services and businesses all catering to the queer community, queer-conscious legislation, men everywhere seeking sex with men and everywhere the visible signs of AIDS on wasting bodies. The risk for acquiring HIV may have been high but for those willing to access them, queer-friendly prevention campaigns and AIDS service organizations flourished. Still closeted and dating women, however, I dared not access daylight-hour educational offerings of San Francisco’s gay scene. I instead restricted my involvement in the community to the safety of night and the anonymity its’ cover provided for sexual encounters. I discovered that the consumption of alcohol and, eventually, drugs facilitated these encounters. The drugs soon took

³⁶ MSM is the acronym for *men who have sex with men*. Given the inherent subjectivity of identity categorizations, MSM provides greater inclusivity for purposes of AIDS prevention (AVERT, 2012).

over. Whereas once I used to overcome inhibitions about having sex with men, eventually I used sex with men to facilitate using. Inspired by the November 1991 retirement announcement of Magic Johnson from basketball because of his HIV+ status, I arranged testing for HIV. I learned on January 9, 1992 that like Magic, Michel Foucault³⁷ and too many others, I was HIV+. I immediately experienced regret at the depth of internalized homophobia which had led to this moment. It was well past time for me to think and act differently in relation to myself. It was well past time to think and behave differently in relation to others.

A positive result of testing positive for HIV was that it prompted my coming out to family and friends in the San Francisco area. I met with acceptance at practically every turn. It turned out that the relational fabric could withstand my claiming a queer identity and that the rejection I so feared was, for the most part, in my mind alone. Just before my thirtieth birthday and after a lengthy stint in a gay-oriented recovery program it was time for me to test the relational fabric back home on PEI. I began a two-week summer vacation by returning with my parents to our old Great George Street neighborhood for Mass at St. Dunstan's Basilica. It still makes me laugh that the readings on that particular Sunday were of Sodom and Gomorrah and that in his sermon the priest bemoaned their addressing without specifically naming the "worst sin of all: homosexuality." We left Church, walked to the gay parking lot across the street from our old family home on Great George Street and got into the car. No sooner were we in the car than my mother said "I think Father was way out of line, he doesn't know whose parents were in

³⁷ From Kerr (1984): Foucault died in Paris of an AIDS-related illness on June 25, 1984, the very month French and American researchers jointly announced confirmation of HIV as the cause of AIDS (US Department of Health & Human Services, 2011).

church today and now they're going to feel it is their fault that their son or daughter is gay."

Despite our shared misgivings about what the priest said in his sermon and how he said it I realized that my mother enveloped the topic of homosexuality with fault and blame. I began to contemplate not coming-out during that trip but settled upon the intolerability of returning to San Francisco and my sister, friends and recovery group without having said a word. I had long ago worked through notions of fault and blame in my relationship with myself and would no longer tolerate their impoverishing my relations with others.

Out of the closet

Over the next week and a half I invited my parents out for breakfast and each time my mother came up with excuses as to why they were just too busy to accept the invitation. By the time they finally accepted I had decided it would be easier to first announce that I was HIV+ and might die from an AIDS-related illness than it would be to disclose my living as a gay man. I was right. They both expressed support, concern and love for me upon learning my HIV status. I then dropped the bomb. I recall the few words of my father, spoken without hesitation, "that doesn't matter to us" just as I recall my mother's gasp before muttering "now that hurts."

Though hurt by her immediate reaction, I soon realized our relationship would survive. The way Mom peppered me with questions as she followed me around the house the last two days of that trip I knew we would work through by talking through her shock and disappointment: Is it my fault, was I an overbearing mother? What about the girls you went out with? Are you sure this isn't just a phase that everyone in San Francisco goes through? We met up again the following year in Maine, just a few short months after I had experienced a rather painful break-up. There we were on my hotel room bed with Mom again asking me questions. This time, however, the

questions were of an entirely new sort: How was I doing? Had my heart mended? How was James doing? Were we still friends? Might we reconcile? She expressed regret at not having met him and I expressed appreciation for her questions, questions that by affirming my same-sex relationships strengthened our own relationship.

Summary

On that note I conclude my introduction of 1965 as ‘yesterday’ within this research. Though positing that the then developing relationships between and amongst civil, women’s and gay rights movements produced widespread and long-lasting effect, by the end of the 1960’s queers and queerness remained in large part a question of criminalized sex in public or decriminalized (and disgusting) sex in private. Routinely circulated and little problematized representations of queers as sick, dangerous predators discouraged any public consideration of such issues as queer personhood or of our inclusion within the relational fabric. As reviewed in the next chapter, such issues were not taken up until the 1970’s and beyond.

In closing this chapter, however, I offer US President Barack Obama’s recent inaugural address to illustrate Foucault’s (1983) contention of today being “a day like every other, or much more, a day which is never like another” (p. 359). By weaving references to civil, women’s and gay rights movements into America’s long story of independence and by positioning past accomplishments alongside present-day barriers to equality, Obama (2013) captures the genealogical method:

We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths — that all of us are created equal — is the star that guides us still, just as it guided our forebears through Seneca

Falls³⁸ and Selma and Stonewall.... It is now our generation's task to carry on what those pioneers began. For our journey is not complete until our wives, our mothers and daughters can earn a living equal to their efforts. Our journey is not complete until our gay brothers and sisters are treated like anyone else under the law – for if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well. Our journey is not complete until no citizen is forced to wait for hours to exercise the right to vote. (paras. 20-21)

³⁸ From the United States National Park Service (2012): “In 1848 Elizabeth Cady Stanton and four other women invited the public to the First Women's Rights Convention to discuss expanding the role of women in America” (para. 1). The Convention took place in Seneca Falls, NY.

CHAPTER FOUR: A BRIEF GENEALOGY OF PSYCHIATRY AND THE CHARTER

This chapter's genealogical analysis is presented in two sections. I first reintroduce the story of Everett George Klippert, to review the not-so-distant past medical discourse of homosexuality as pathology and its' systematic application to homosexual Canadians. I acknowledge the dehumanizing medical interventions inflicted upon homosexuals and explore the psychiatric establishment's incremental policy reversal towards considering homosexuality as a normal variant of human sexuality (1948-1987). I close the historical overview section with an analysis of Section 15 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Constitution Act, 1982) and of its' considerable impact on the everyday lives of queer-identified Canadians. I note landmark legal cases and the centrality of the 'living tree doctrine of progressive interpretation' to Canada's reputation as a global-leader in the struggle for equality of queer-identified citizens. I summarize the historical overview section by distinguishing emerging legal equality from the ongoing socio-cultural stigmatization of queer-identified Canadians as recently legislated in Alberta Bill-44. Finally I problematize the peculiar legislative pattern that emerged from the Legislative Assembly of PEI in response to the weaving of queer Canadians into Canada's relational fabric over these past fifteen odd years. I conclude that whenever, however and wherever provided an opportunity to legislatively expand PEI's relational fabric, PEI governments instead invoke the "dying tree doctrine of regressive interpretation" to further promote both heterosexual superiority and queer unintelligibility.

Pathologization

Psychiatric expertise assumed a central role in the earlier reviewed saga of Everett George Klippert. In *Klippert v. The Queen* (1967), SCC Justices referenced a Dr. MacDonald testifying to the unlikelihood Klippert “could refrain from indulging in this [homosexual] behaviour again without assistance, that is assistance from other people, trained people” (p. 7). All designed to cure or convert homosexuals of the disease of homosexuality, some of the notorious assistance options then available to trained people of the medical establishment included: lobotomies, drug and hormone treatments, chemical castrations and electroshock, electroconvulsive and aversion therapies (Comité des Droits des Gais et lesbiennes CSQ, 2008; Robertson, 2004). As noted in Burr (1997) “the medical establishment viewed homosexuality with such abhorrence that virtually any proposed treatment seemed defensible” (p. 1).

Early dissidents within psychiatry

Not all medical professionals, however, shared the establishment’s collective abhorrence of homosexuality. Kinsey (1948), armed with findings that up to 10% of males and 6% of females exclusively engage in same-sex behaviours (The Kinsey Institute, 2009), criticized “scientists tendency to represent homosexuals and heterosexuals as ‘inherently different types of individuals’” (Group for Advancement of Psychiatry (GAP), 2007, para. 25). Upon completion of his male-focused sexual behaviour research, Kinsey (1948) famously and, I suggest queerly, concluded that “males do not represent two discrete populations, heterosexual and homosexual. The world is not to be divided into sheep and goats. It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories” (p. 639). Furthermore, Kinsey criticized the use of conversion therapies against homosexuals as he could not scientifically validate a single case of

conversion to heterosexuality (Isay, 1990). What Kinsey and his staff confirmed, however, was that so-called converts were dependent upon homosexual fantasies to achieve and sustain arousal during heterosexual sex. As stated by one ex-homosexual “I cut out all of that and don’t even think of men – except when I masturbate” (Burr, 1997, p. 1).

Psychiatry as a subjective science

Subsequent 1951 research by Ford and Beach confirming the cross-cultural and cross-species existence of homosexuality supported those scientists who dared posit homosexuality as a natural variant of sexuality (GAP, 2007). A critical review of Ford and Beach’s research by Yates (1953) framed the struggle brewing within psychiatry as being between objectivity and subjectivity or between “what is ... [and] what ought to be” (p. 166). Yates condemned Ford and Beach’s objective stance toward homosexuality for “inadequately safeguarding the unwary reader from the temptation to conclude that what is established as not unnatural is therefore also not undesirable” (p. 167). The blatantly unscientific recommendations from Yates that psychiatrists de-emphasize scientific methods in order to buttress established norms met with famous resistance. In stark opposition to Yates, Dr. Evelyn Hooker emphasized that psychiatric credibility stemmed from pathology being defined in objective and empirically observable terms (Burr, 1997). In 1957 Hooker “undertook ground breaking research that led to a radical discovery: homosexuals were not, by definition, sick” (Frameline, 2007, p. 1).

Psychiatry as an objective science

Problematizing psychiatric presumptions to conflate wellness with heterosexuals and sickness with homosexuals, Hooker “sent shock waves through the psychiatric community” (p. 1) upon confirming the inability of experienced psychologists to differentiate between Rorschach

test results of heterosexual and homosexual participants (GAP, 2007). With other researchers soon replicating Hooker's findings, the sickness model of homosexuality became increasingly difficult to defend (Board for the Advancement of Psychiatry in the Public Interest, 1992). In 1968, The American Psychiatric Association (APA) reclassified the diagnosis of homosexuality from 'sociopathic personality disturbance' to 'sexual deviation' (GAP, 2007). However downgraded the new diagnosis, continued classification of homosexuals as pathological deviants provided medical professionals with ongoing justification to inflict dehumanizing institutionalizations, treatments, procedures and counselling services upon homosexuals (Hausman, 2004; Robertson, 2004). As illustrated by House of Commons debate on C-150 in 1969, continued classification of homosexuals as diseased provided a cloak of legitimacy to "people outside of our profession who wish to deny civil rights to homosexuals" (Spitzer, 1973, p. 1). It is especially pertinent to this research that the tactical recourse to justify discrimination against homosexuals based on their having a diagnosis proved especially consequential for lesbian and gay teachers. Blount (2005) documented the DSM diagnosis' centrality to both the stereotyping of lesbian and gay teachers as sick, dangerous predators and their routine loss of employment positions and professional certifications.

Declassification

With the reclassification of homosexuality to 'sexual deviation' in DSM-II, increasing numbers of psychiatrists began publically questioning both the ongoing medicalization of homosexuality and ethicality of dangerous and dehumanizing conversion therapies (Hausman, 2004). Some psychiatrists began to see psychiatry, itself, as pathologically construed given its' official position on homosexuality and the corresponding clinical practices approved for treating

homosexuals. As stated in 1974 by prominent psychiatrist Marmor, “it would be ironic if we ourselves were impairing the lives and adaptive potentials of people by our labelling methods” (p. 2). Given the expanded body of scientific evidence warranting the removal of homosexuality from the DSM and corresponding lack of objective scientific evidence to the contrary, in 1973 the APA declassified homosexuality as a mental illness (GAP, 2007). Per Robertson (2004), declassification of homosexuality “marked the [psychiatric] profession’s movement away from a role of imposing social and religious mores... [to] a more scientific and non-discriminatory stance in research and therapy with homosexual individuals” (p. 165).

The 1973 declassification of homosexuality as mental illness did not immediately result in its full acceptance as a normal variant of sexuality. As expressed by Spitzer (1973), the declassification processes’ lead architect, “by no longer listing it [homosexuality] as a disorder we are not saying that it is ‘normal’ or as valuable as heterosexuality” (p. 2). Given the psychiatric profession’s continued ambivalence towards homosexuality, reprinted versions of DSM-II included the compromise diagnosis Sexual Orientation Disturbance (Homosexuality) (SOD) (GAP, 2007). The diagnosis of SOD applied only to conflicted homosexuals seeking conversion to heterosexuality (Spitzer, 1973). Opponents within psychiatry of the SOD diagnosis questioned why no such comparable pathological diagnosis existed for disgruntled heterosexuals seeking conversion to homosexuality (GAP, 2007). The APA eventually agreed with its own internal critics and in 1980 replaced SOD with Ego-Dystonic Homosexuality (EDH). Conrad (2007) framed this latest diagnosis as having narrowed the clinical “emphasis from conflict about sexual orientation to the inability to achieve heterosexual arousal” (p. 101). In 1987 the APA

discarded EDH, having come to view it as an archaic representation of heterosexism and inconsistent with scientific objectivity (GAP, 2007).

Psychiatry's new ethical paradigm

This nineteen year period of incremental de-classification reflecting incremental adoption of evidence-based objectivity towards matters of sexuality and mental illness simultaneously necessitated re-formulating ethical guidelines for psychiatrists engaged in the care for and treatment of homosexual patients. According to the APA (2013), ethical guidelines are “not laws, but standards of conduct which define the essentials of honourable behaviour for the physician” (p. 2). Since issuing the position statement *Psychiatric Treatment and Sexual Orientation*, the APA (1998) is on record as

opposing any psychiatric treatment, such as reparative or conversion therapy, which is based upon the assumption that homosexuality per se is a mental disorder or based upon the a priori assumption that the patient should change his/her sexual homosexual orientation. (para. 11)

In response to individual psychiatrists who nonetheless continue conducting conversion therapy treatments, the APA (2000) both updated and re-asserted its ethical opposition to conversion or reparative therapies by stating that in the last four decades, "reparative"

therapists have not produced any rigorous scientific research to substantiate their claims of cure. Until there is such research available, APA recommends that ethical practitioners refrain from attempts to change individuals' sexual orientation, keeping in mind the medical dictum to first, do no harm. (para. 2)

Likewise, the American Psychological Association published *Sexual Orientation and Youth: A Primer for Principals, Educators and School Personnel* (Just the Facts Coalition, 2008) in response “to a recent upsurge in promotion of efforts to change sexual orientation through therapy and religious ministries . . . [and] demands that these perspectives on homosexuality be given equal times in school” (p. 2). To prepare school teachers, principals, counsellors and staff for confronting those representing homosexuality as a mental disorder or the emergence of same-sex attraction as “abnormal or mentally unhealthy” (p. 5), the APA reminds school personnel that “the general consensus of major medical, health, and mental health professions [is] that both heterosexuality and homosexuality are normal expressions of human sexuality” (p. 5).

California law: Are homophobic psychiatrists and parents the new controversy?

In September 2012, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law California Senate Bill 1172, *Sexual Orientation Change Efforts* (2012). This first³⁹ of its kind North American legislation prohibits state-licensed mental health professionals “from engaging in sexual orientation change efforts . . . with a patient under 18 years of age” (para. 2). Whether the treatment is sought by the minor patient or by the minor’s parents/guardians, state-licensed professionals administering sexual orientation change therapy (SOCT) to minors are guilty of “unprofessional conduct . . . [which] shall subject the mental health provider to discipline by the licensing entity for that mental health provider” (Section 865.2). By prioritizing California’s “compelling interest in protecting the physical and psychological well-being of minors” (Section (n)), I represent this legislation as crystalizing the radical transformation within psychiatric discourse over the last

³⁹ Per Zernike (2013), this particular issue has garnered increasing attention in the US as New Jersey has since become the second state to pass such legislation and it is anticipated that Massachusetts will soon become the third.

half-century. By extending standards of conduct for ethical practice into the legal realm and, per California House Speaker John Perez, by emphasizing “that it is inappropriate for anyone, including parents, to subject anyone to dehumanizing activity” (Daily Mail Reporter 2012, para. 12), SB 1172 has the potential of problematizing today’s relational fabric along fault lines far different from those of yesterday.

Significant change has taken place since the 1960’s and psychiatry classifying homosexuality as a sociopathic personality disturbance and psychiatrists contributing to the criminal prosecution of homosexuals. Whereas psychiatry once parroted social and religious mores and gay teachers lost their jobs and professional certification, now psychiatry problematizes these exact mores as threats to the psychological and physical well-being of youth. I conclude this section expressing alliterative confidence that present-day psychiatric perspectives provide plentiful possibilities for enriching today’s relational fabric.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms

Almost simultaneous to the 1987 publication of the homosexuality-free *DSM-III-R* was the April 1985 enactment of the equality rights Section 15 (s.15) of *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (The *Charter*). With the enactment of s.15, individual Canadians were guaranteed “equality before and under the law and equal benefit and protection of the law” (Constitution Act, 1982, para. 20). Unless deemed “demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society” (para. 2) under Section 1 (s.1) of the *Charter*, Canadian laws would no longer remain so if proved in court to discriminate against one group of Canadians over another. At inception, s.15 specified grounds upon which Canadian laws, must accord equal benefits and protections: race, nationality or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical

disability (para. 20). The Constitution Committee of 1981, responsible for vetting the anti-discrimination wording of s.15, voted 22-2 to exclude sexual orientation from amongst the grounds specified. As then MP Svend Robinson (2005) recalled of the committee debate, “I will never forget the words of Conservative critic Jake Epps, who dismissed the proposal [to include sexual orientation in s.15] by saying that we shouldn’t try to include every ‘barnacle and eavestrough’ in the Constitution” (p. 1).

The “living tree” doctrine

Epps and the overwhelming majority of then legislators who equated queer-identified Canadians to hangers-on and gutter-dwellers undeserving of constitutionally guaranteed equality would eventually be challenged by the *Charter’s* more flexible conceptualizations of who what counts as Canadians and what it means to be Canadian. The *Charter*, after all, is rooted like all post-1929 Canadian constitutional law in the living tree doctrine of progressive interpretation. Heralded by Hambrook (2008) as “a Canadian contribution to the world” (p. 1), the living tree doctrine was made famous, ironically enough, by Englishman Lord Sankey and his fellow members on the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council upon their overturning⁴⁰ the unanimous decision delivered by the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) in *Edwards v. Canada* (1928) .

The notorious *Edwards* decision upheld as constitutional the ongoing disqualification of Canadian women from appointment to the Senate. To justify their decision, SCC justices relied on a fixed interpretation of the male-specific connotation of ‘qualified persons’ found in *The British North America Act* (BNA) of 1867. According to Asper (2006), Lord Sankey and his

⁴⁰ From Asper (2006): The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in Britain acted as “our [Canadians] final court of appeal at the time” (para. 80).

Privy Council colleagues outright “rejected the notion that the BNAA was a document locked in time” (para. 10). Framing the BNAA’s 1867-era as “days more barbarous than ours” (para.10), Lord Sankey reminded SCC justices that “the BNAA planted in Canada a living tree capable of growth, and expansion within its limits” (para. 56). This 1929 iteration of the living tree doctrine meant newly enfranchised Canadian women of the early 20th century were, indeed, ‘qualified persons’ and eligible for appointment to Canada’s Senate (Historica, 2009). Continuing application and evolving iterations of the living-tree doctrine implied meanings in the *Charter* would remain open-ended and subjected to dynamic, not static, interpretation (Fraser, 2003).

The open-endedness of the *Charter* allowed sexual orientation to become read into the proscribed grounds for s. 15 equality violations. In *Egan v. Canada* (1995) a deeply divided SCC ruled 4-1-4 to uphold as constitutional the opposite sex definition of spouse in the *Old Age Security Act*. James Egan and John Nesbit, living together since 1948 in a manner “similar to that which one expects to find in a marriage” (p. 2), were ruled victims of discrimination. A slim majority of five justices found that the Act’s exclusion of same-sex couples “reinforced the stereotype that homosexuals cannot and do not form lasting, caring, mutually supportive relationships with economic interdependence in the same manner as heterosexual couples” (p. 9). In the final analysis, however, the discrimination was deemed justifiable as the “government must be accorded some flexibility in extending social benefits and does not have to be proactive in recognizing new social relationships” (p. 6).

The high court justices ruled unanimously, however, on the issue of sexual orientation becoming a proscribed ground for discrimination within the *Charter*. In its’ *Egan v. Canada* decision, the SCC ruled 9-0 for sexual orientation to be “a deeply personal characteristic that is

either unchangeable or changeable only at unacceptable personal costs, and so falls within the ambit of s.15 protection” (p. 3). The *Charter*’s evolution to include sexual orientation as an illegal motive for discrimination motivated MPs, in 1996, to similarly adopt the seventeen year old, long ignored recommendation of The Canadian Human Rights Commission that sexual orientation be a protected ground of discrimination under the *Canadian Human Rights Act* (CHRA) (Canadian Lesbian & Gay Archives, 1998). Following both the 1995 *Egan* ruling and the long awaited amendment to the *CHRA*, it became illegal federally, unless ruled justifiable, to discriminate publically (*Charter*-governed) and privately (*CHRA*-governed) on the basis of sexual orientation throughout Canada (Hurley, 2007).

Delwin Vriend

There existed no corresponding provincial guarantee against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in Alberta and PEI, the two Canadian jurisdictions deemed by Robinson (2006) as the “most resistant to the provision of equal rights for gays and lesbians” (p. 1). In *Vriend v. Alberta* (1998), a ruling considered by Harris (2008) as “one of the three most important legal decisions in the history of the court” (p. 1), the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) addressed divergent equality guarantees between the *Charter* and provincial human rights legislation of Alberta and, by association, PEI. In 1991 Delwin Vriend was terminated from private employment at Kings University College in Edmonton for “his non-compliance with the policy of the College on homosexual practice” (*Vriend v. Alberta*, 1998, p. 507). In response to his termination Vriend filed a complaint of discrimination in the area of employment on the ground of sexual orientation with the Alberta Human Rights Commission. The complaint was promptly dismissed, however, as sexual orientation was not a prohibited ground of

discrimination within Alberta's *Individual Rights Protection Act (IRPA)*. Not to be dismayed, Vriend sued the Government of Alberta by alleging the *IRPA* violated the *Charter*. Mr. Vriend won at trial as the Alberta Court of Queen's Bench judge ruled his termination an unjustifiable *Charter* violation and ordered sexual orientation read into the *IRPA* as a prohibited ground of discrimination (Centre for Constitutional Studies, 2008). Likewise not dismayed, the Government of Alberta chose to actively defend its "decision to ignore the rights of homosexuals as reasonably justified in a democracy" (p. 1). A majority of justices on the Alberta Court of Appeal agreed with the Alberta government, overturned the trial judge's decision and, in *Vriend v. Alberta* (1996), celebrated the *IRPA*'s neutrality on "so obviously a divisive issue" (p. 9) as sexual orientation:

In its current state, the *IRPA* leaves heterosexuals the choice of contracting with, or employing, homosexuals. Similarly, homosexuals may employ, contract, or deal with heterosexuals as they choose . . . it still must be concluded that the impact of the *IRPA*, in its unaltered wording, is the same upon the homosexual segment of Alberta's population as it is upon the heterosexual segment. (p. 5)

Experiencing his termination from employment as anything but neutral, Mr. Vriend engaged his legal option of last resort and appealed the decision to the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC). In *Vriend v. Alberta* (1998), justices of Canada's highest court expressed unanimous agreement with Mr. Vriend and unanimous disagreement with both the judicial reasoning of the Alberta Court of Appeal and the legislative philosophy of Albertan legislators. In their decision the Justices found that "in excluding sexual orientation from the *IRPA*'s protection, the government [of Alberta and, by association, PEI] has, in effect, stated that 'all persons are equal in dignity

and rights' except gay men and lesbians. Such a message, even if it is only implicit, must offend s.15(1)" (p. 552) of the *Charter*. With its *Vriend* (1998) decision, SCC justices confirmed that discriminatory treatment of sexual minorities, whether expressed through provincial legislation or lower court decisions, would not pass constitutional muster in post-*Charter* Canada.

In the aftermath of *Vriend* the Alberta government, in spite of considerable "pressure from conservatives and religious groups" (Wood, 2008, p. 1), threatened but refrained from invoking the Notwithstanding Clause, Section 33, of the *Charter*. The Notwithstanding Clause was described at its 1981 inception by then Minister of Justice Jean Chretien as "a safety valve [that] provides the flexibility that is required to ensure that legislatures rather than judges have the final say on important matters of public policy" (Johansen & Rosen, 2008, p. 8). In the 11 years following *Vriend* (1998) the Alberta legislature enacted a half-hearted final say over the SCC by refusing to invoke the spirit of the landmark *Vriend* decision. In stark contrast to the June 1998 legislative inclusion of sexual orientation within the PEI *Human Rights Act*, a mere two months after being compelled to do so by *Vriend* (1998), Albertan legislators did not amend the *Alberta Human Rights Act* to include sexual orientation until the June 2009 passage of Alberta Bill-44 (*Human Rights, Citizenship and Multiculturalism Amendment Act*, 2009). This belated piece of legislation also enshrined the new human right of mandatory parental notification whenever public school lessons deal "primarily and explicitly with religion, human sexuality or sexual orientation" (p. 4). Positioned by MLA Anderson (2009) as merely legislating views held by "thousands and thousands of parents, the silent majority, severely normal Albertans" (p. 1469), Alberta Bill-44 requires school staff permit a student's dismissal from class wherever school lessons focus upon such "controversial topics" (CBC News, 2009, p. 1).

Though their post-*Vriend* compliance processes may have been separated by 11 years, both PEI and Alberta legislators employed similar legislative reasoning to legitimize heterosexual superiority.

PEI's history of legislating 'discrimination within discrimination'

During 1998 deliberations on amending the PEI *Human Rights Act* to include sexual orientation as a proscribed ground of discrimination, PEI legislators debated restricting another of the Act's proscribed grounds, marital status, to opposite sex configurations of marriage and common law marriage. Given judicial precedents then being established in Canadian courts, MLA Dr. Herb Dickieson (1998) characterized legislative efforts to limit marital status to opposite-sex configurations as an approach already "ruled against by courts in other provinces [because] discrimination within discrimination kind of kills the whole purpose" (p. 5661) of human rights legislation. An MLA Deighan (1998), seeing things otherwise, supported the exclusion of same-sex relationships as "on this issue the people have spoken loud and clear ... [and] I feel compelled to represent what I judge and what I view to be the majority of my constituents" (p. 5662). A majority of PEI's elected legislators agreed with Deighan and voted to "strengthen marriage and enrich family life" (p. 5663) by, ironically enough, legislating the ongoing acceptability of discrimination towards certain relationships and some families. Having disregarded Dickieson's prescient warnings and apparently having already forgotten a two-month-old lesson from *Vriend* (1998) that "the concept of democracy is broader than the notion of majority rule" (p. 566), legislators on PEI and throughout Canada would soon receive remedial instruction on constitutional interpretation from SCC justices.

Framed by Elliott and Bonauto (2004) as “the body blow to discrimination” (p. 610) against same-sex relationships, in their near-unanimous *M v H* (1999) decision SCC justices ruled that legislation entailing

denial of status and benefits to same-sex partners does not *a priori* enhance respect for the traditional family, nor does it reinforce the commitment of the legislature to the values in the *Charter*. [In this case] no evidence was adduced showing any beneficial impact of the exclusion on society, or what *Charter* values would be served by the exclusion; but the detrimental effects clearly exist, both for the individual without recourse to the family law regime, and for society, faced with the prospect of giving social assistance to that aggrieved individual in need. (p. 13)

Over a ten year period, M and H lived together, had sex together and made financial decisions together, even opening and running a business together. M. learned upon dissolution of her relationship with H. that she was ineligible to file for needed spousal support because the definition of spouse in Ontario’s *Family Law Act (FLA)* excluded recognition of same-sex relationships. M. sued and won a resounding victory for herself and for Canadians in same-sex relationships. In their ruling, SCC justices

found that it was constitutionally imperative under the Canadian Charter for laws [i.e. *PEI Human Rights Act*] to provide equal treatment of same-sex common law couples and opposite sex common law couples. It called upon the lawmakers of Canada to rectify all Canadian laws, rather than force gays and lesbians to resort to the Courts. (p. 608)

Weaving together as it did earlier SCC rulings that Canadian queers were protected against discrimination (*Egan v. Canada*, 1995) throughout Canada (*Vriend v. Alberta*, 1998), I

contend *M. v. H.* (1999) furthered the weaving of queers and their relationships into the Canadian relational fabric. Just like their counterparts in some opposite-sex relationships, individuals in some same-sex relationships “become financially dependent in the course of a lengthy, intimate relationship [and may require] some relief from financial hardship resulting from the breakdown of that relationship” (p. 13). Given that the *FLA* was “designed in part to reduce the demands on the public welfare system” (p. 10), the ruling further protected the public purse from new welfare claimants resulting from relationship breakdowns. Since the need for welfare does not discriminate by sexual orientation, Canadian laws providing benefits to unmarried couples could not discriminate by sexual orientation. Without yet addressing the looming issue of marriage, the *M v H* ruling sanctioned queer common law relationships because their well-managed dissolution was deemed of interest to all Canadians.

The living tree doctrine again

Hurley (2007) posited the widespread impact of *M. v H.* “became apparent in virtually every [Canadian] jurisdiction” (p. 12) and hastened constitutional challenges to extend the option of marriage to same-sex couples. Two provincial-level court decisions, *Barbeau v. BC* (2003) and *Halpern v. Canada* (2003), ruled the exclusion of same-sex couples from marriage unconstitutional for “offending the dignity of persons in same-sex relationships” (p. 28). These provincial-level courts ordered the definition of marriage reformulated to “the voluntary union for life of two persons to the exclusion of all others” (p. 36). Fraser (2003) suggests that by accepting these rulings and referring draft legislation to the SCC “for advice on how to reconcile the issue of same-sex marriage” (p. 18), the government of Prime Minister Chretien followed the process of constitutional interpretation envisioned at inception of the *Charter* by then Justice

Minister Chretien. In his 1981 response to a question from MP Svend Robinson as to whether the Charter would include sexual orientation as a proscribed ground of discrimination, Chretien replied “that will be for the courts to decide” (p. 16). The Supreme Court of Canada (2004) decided the issue of same sex marriage by ratifying as constitutional the government’s proposal to define civil marriage as “the lawful union of two persons to the exclusion of all others” (p. 699). In their reference, SCC justices reaffirmed “one of the most fundamental principles of Canadian constitutional interpretation . . . [that] our constitution is a living tree, which by way of progressive interpretation accommodates and addresses the realities of modern life” (p. 3). Upon passage of *The Civil Marriage Act* on July 20, 2005, the thirty-fourth anniversary of Everett Klippert’s release from federal prison (Nierobisz et al., 2008), Canada became the fourth country to legalize same-sex marriage (Bourassa, 2008). Furthermore, Fraser (2008) indicates Canada “became widely known in the United States, and indeed throughout the world, ... [as] the first country in the world to offer same-sex marriage to persons who were neither citizens nor residents of the country” (p. 614). Inspired by Hambrook (2008) heralding the living tree doctrine as “a Canadian contribution to the world” (p. 1) I likewise trumpet same-sex marriage as a Canadian gift to the world’s same-sex marriage seeking inhabitants. Understanding that Canadian marriage solemnization practices fall under provincial jurisdiction, however, I now review the same-sex marriage adoption process specific to PEI. This review underpins my contention that despite repeated rebukes from the SCC, whenever they are provided with the legislative opportunity, a majority of PEI legislators will vote to negate the existence of sexual and gender minorities.

It might surprise that PEI was the “first political jurisdiction in Canada whose government decided to expand marriage to include same-sex couples without first having been forced to do so by a court” (Robinson, 2006, p. 1). By now probably less surprising is that the legislative majority that voted to recognize same-sex marriage on PEI simultaneously deployed a new tactic of discrimination against members of the queer community. As when singling out same-sex relationships for exclusion from protection against discrimination when compelled by *Vriend* (1998) to include sexual orientation amongst proscribed grounds for discrimination within the PEI *Human Rights Act*, in December 2005 PEI legislators carved-out a significant exception within an *Act to Amend the Marriage Act* (2005). As now enacted, PEI marriage law provides provincially-authorized persons performing civil marriages with the right to “refuse to solemnize any marriage that is not in accordance with the person’s religious beliefs” (p. 182).

A similar religious opt-out for marriage commissioners in Saskatchewan, per Graham (2010) “the only other province that has a legislated exemption” (p. 1), was recently reviewed and unanimously rejected by justices of the Court of Appeal for Saskatchewan (2011). Writing for the court ‘In The Matter of Marriage Commissioners Appointed Under *The Marriage Act*, 1995’, Justice White declared the religious exemption “constitutionally offensive” (p. 45) and “a significant step backward if, having won the difficult fight for the right to same-sex civil marriages, gay and lesbian persons could be shunned by the very people charged by the province with solemnizing such unions” (p. 41). Two years after this Saskatchewan ruling, PEI remains the lone Canadian jurisdiction to legislate that provincially licensed marriage commissioners may refuse to perform civil marriage ceremonies by invoking their right of “religious veto” (MacDougall, 2007, p. 351).

Historical Overview and Summary

The everyday life potentials of queer-identified Canadians have witnessed significant improvements since 1965. Foucault (1990) summarized this period as one of “diminished disqualification of ‘perverts’, their condemnation by the law in part eliminated” (p. 115). No longer condemned to lives of incarceration, institutionalization or overt public discrimination, 21st century Canadian queers arguably experience equality before and under the law. While acknowledging the importance of these newfound legal rights and protections I nonetheless conclude, like Grace (2001), that despite “increased civil rights, queerness has still not been substantially and pervasively affirmed as a normal way to be, become and belong in the larger Canadian socio-cultural arena” (p. 5). I liken all those “severely normal” Albertan parents, teachers, administrators, policy-makers and politicians behind Alberta Bill-44 to the PEI policy of conditioning sexual health instruction upon receipt of prior written authorization⁴¹ from parents/guardians (DEECD, 2009b). I join Kennedy (2009a) to posit that in contemporary public school settings, students and teachers still “receive the message that there are things that should not be known or discussed” (p. 1). Finally, I suggest the recent decision of PEI legislators to elevate private religious beliefs above the duty to deliver public services in non-discriminatory fashion exemplifies the continuing legitimization of an impoverished relational fabric on PEI. For as long as PEI public representatives are allowed to discriminatorily deliver the public

⁴¹ From my review of provincially authorized curriculum documents, I conclude that sexual health is the only topic of instruction subjected to such a formal exemption by the DEECD. From off-the-record conversations with PEI teachers, however, I conclude that parents are granted informal exemptions to shield children from public school instruction deemed incompatible with private religious belief (i.e. evolution).

service of civil marriage, how can we expect public schooling or any other public service on PEI to be delivered in non-discriminatory fashion?

CHAPTER FIVE: SCHOOL CLIMATE AND STUDENT WELL-BEING

I begin this chapter with excerpts from separate interviews conducted with Ryan and Brenda. Capturing the spirit of Generation Queer, they both outright reject the inevitability of hostile school climates and the professed powerlessness of administrators to address a school's relational fabric. Their interview excerpts likewise segue into recent large-scale school climate research findings from the perspectives of North American youth. Comprised of diverse population samples (i.e. ages, races, backgrounds, genders and sexualities), these recent North American research findings confirm the hostile schooling environments experienced by many queer and non-queer youth alike on the basis of sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity. This North American research captures the unfortunate yet understandable tendency of many youth, queer-identified or not, to disengage or seek distance from schooling through truancy, academic disruption and reduced aspiration for university. I also focus on hopeful trends emerging from within this same body of literature which are linked to youths' more positive schooling outcomes and increased levels of schooling connectedness. Returning to Wells (2008), I address the following "protective factors" (p. 20) thought to promote school connectedness for queer youth: teachers who intervene when witness to homophobic behaviours; anti-discrimination policies which include sexual orientation that are known by students; school-based Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs); and, supportive relationships with families and friends.

I then highlight the leadership efforts of queer youth and supportive families to make public schools safe for and welcoming to all students. I contrast the newfound voice and visibility of Generation Queer with likewise voluble resistance from some school administrators, school boards and parent groups to the full inclusion of queer youth throughout public education.

Consistent with recent educational, psychiatric and legislative developments in North America, however, I situate ongoing resistance to safe and accepting school policies within contemporary developments to ethical, regulatory and legal frameworks. Frameworks I now tentatively summarize as reflecting a displacement of queers and gender nonconformists from the ‘usual suspects’ requiring vigilance and social containment. In their stead, I suggest that it is homo/trans/queer-phobic individuals who now endure increased scrutiny.

To conclude this literature review chapter I return to the simple insistence of Ryan and Brenda that schools be safe, welcoming sites for all students. I connect their eventual partnership with like-minded JHS administrators to Ryan’s academic turn-around. Finally, I position Ryan’s experience of equal access to schooling opportunities as an example of the possibilities for relationships and public education when school administrators assume ethical accountability for submitting stereotypes and relational status-quos to the work of thought. For as Foucault (1984a) reminds us, ongoing examination of relational fabrics “make it possible to bring out the freedom of the subject and its’ relationship to others – [and] which constitute the very stuff (*matière*) of ethics” (p. 300).

I wasn’t doing well academically in seventh grade because I had zero motivation at the time. The people at the school, I don’t know if it was because we were young or what, had a stigma about being gay so they treated me pretty shitty. So many people made comments about me I couldn’t concentrate on school-work. Instead I tried to impress them and get them to like me by being the class clown ... which meant I wasn’t concentrating on school work. But whenever I brought up the comments with a teacher they would just shrug it off because they didn’t know how to deal with it. There was this

one time I actually went to the principal's office and told them I was having trouble with some people. I was told 'what's happening to you is not OK but unfortunately we can't control all the bullying ... it's going to happen.' So I left the office and nothing was done and nothing changed at that school. It was not a healthy environment for anyone to be different.

Whereas Ryan reports school staff did little or nothing on his behalf, Brenda did a great deal to fill the damaging and dangerous void of accountability. Sharing Ryan's frustration and disappointment with lack of administrator attention to the school's relational fabric, Brenda called repeated meetings and case conferences with teachers and administrators. Sensing they "read the research and saw me as the over-protective single mother of a boy with no father in the picture," Brenda nonetheless expected school leaders to assume professional/ethical accountability for keeping students safe at school. Instead of support, however, Brenda encountered school leaders focused exclusively upon Ryan's academic shortcomings. Brenda recalls that

it was in grade seven when Ryan made the transition to JHS that things became really difficult for him. He did come home and share his distress in terms of how he was being treated and the things that people were saying so I called a couple of private meetings with school personnel. At one point they admitted to having received some training on bullying but figured that they could not be expected to always intervene because bullying, is so complex that it could be happening right in front of them and they might not even know it ... it almost felt like apathy to me. But school staff voiced strong concerns that Ryan lacked academic motivation and that Ryan disliked French immersion and that

Ryan lacked focus. They only wanted to treat Ryan's symptoms without confronting the real problem which was the school's culture and climate not being accepting of diversity. So realizing things were not going anywhere, I started bringing Ryan into the meetings. I thought that if I made it safe he would tell staff what he was telling me at home and then they would start doing something about it, right? Wrong. In their eyes it was still about what Ryan needed to do to improve his academic performance. I left our final meeting knowing that Ryan, his issues and, most importantly, the school's issue with diversity were not being taken seriously. I then began to investigate my rights around transferring Ryan to another school. You see beyond being an academic write-off, Ryan's seventh grade most concerned me because of what it was doing to him as a person. Up until that point I had a happy, joyful child who was now tearing apart. As a mother I could not, would not and, fortunately, I did not have to send Ryan back there for another year.

Unswayed by administrators' professed powerlessness to address the school's relational fabric and even less convinced that academics be prioritized over safety, Brenda felt fortunate⁴² to learn that she need not return Ryan to the poisoned⁴³ and poisoning environment of his first JHS. Even more fortunate from her perspective, Ryan transferred to a school from which she "could not have asked for better support" (Hilton, 2013, p. 178) and at which he blossomed

⁴² I acknowledge, as did Brenda, that not all parents and students are fortunate enough to reside in a district with school choice options. Nonetheless, I contend the transfer experience of Ryan and Brenda confirms that JHS staff can indeed weave a relational fabric that is safe and healthy for all students.

⁴³ From Toronto District School Board (2004): "negative or "poisoned" environments [are] created and fostered by acts or omissions that maintain offensive or intimidating climates for study or work" (p. 4).

academically⁴⁴. Characterizing the climate of Ryan's new school, Brenda warns that though "there was homophobia at Ryan's school, it was decisively dealt with from the top . . . school leadership set the tone that homophobia was an unacceptable basis for making decisions affecting students" (p. 189). I suggest this characterization by Brenda, however cautious, troubles the decade-old conclusion from Boechenek and Brown (2001), that "verbal harassment is an inevitable part of being gay and that they [queer and gender variant youth] have no right to expect adults to confront their harassers or condemn the harassment" (p. 38). From experiencing school administrator apathy to school administrator accountability, from Brenda's fears of "my child becoming damaged beyond repair," to writing effusive letters of gratitude to staff upon her child's JHS graduation⁴⁵, and from "an academic write-off" to academic recognition, the JHS saga of Ryan and Brenda encourages revisiting the previous chapter to ask this question: Like same sex couples in search of a PEI marriage commissioner, should queer youth and their parents anticipate negation by some but not all administrators/adults in PEI schools?

Canadian School Climate Research

Applying findings⁴⁶ from the first large-scale national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in Canadian schools to the PEI context, similar to same-sex marriage seekers, queer youth and their families should expect negation by some but not all administrators/adults in PEI schools. Commissioned by EGALE Canada Human Rights Trust,

⁴⁴ By the time of his graduation from JHS, Ryan received academic achievement awards in both English and science.

⁴⁵ Excerpt from a letter Brenda wrote to staff at Ryan's second JHS: "Wow, imagine what we would be pumping into the world if all kids had twelve years of school like Ryan did these past two years".

⁴⁶ Taylor et al. (2011) found that "some school authorities and some parents tacitly approve of homophobia as an efficient technology for making children turn out heterosexual" (p. 11).

authored by Taylor et al. (2011) and provocatively titled *Every Class in Every School*⁴⁷, the research addressed the “lack of a solid Canadian evidence base . . . on the situation of LGBTQ students” (p. 14). The report documents findings that include 64% of queer youth and 15% of non-queer youth respondents report feeling unsafe at school due to perceived or actual sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, race and family status. As for the impact of school climate on school attendance, 30% of queer youth and 11% of non-queer youth report skipping as a result of “feeling unsafe at school or on the way to school” (p. 89). Furthermore, 71% of queer youth and 47% of non-queer youth report there being at least one unsafe place in their school for queer-identified students. With regards to experiencing harassment at school, 57% of queer youth and 26% of non-queer youth report being verbally harassed on the basis of gender expression and 21% of queer youth and 8% of non-queer youth report their being physically harassed on the basis of sexual orientation. Finally, 63% of queer youth and 58% of non-queer youth report being upset by homophobic comments and 33% of queer youth and 19% of non-queer youth report “school staff members never intervene when homophobic comments are being made” (p. 110). What sense can be made of this new Canadian evidence base on schooling climates?

The Executive Director of EGALE, Helen Kennedy (2008), characterized early releases of this research data by stating that though “we may have human rights for LGBTQ people in Canada, but you’d never know it based on these results” (p. 1). Given that the final research

⁴⁷ Based on 14.1% of students identifying as LGBTQ in the controlled condition component of the survey, Taylor et al. (2011) posit it being “... extremely unlikely that there is any class in any high school anywhere in Canada, public or private, religious or secular, that does not have students who are LGBTQ” (p. 31).

findings document the widespread policing and disciplining of sexual and gender conformity in Canadian schools, however, I suggest that homophobic school climates also restrict the rights of straight Canadian students. Beyond the aforementioned number of heterosexual-identified students either upset by homophobic comments or targeted for gender expression-related harassment, Taylor et al. (2011) found “statistically, about the same number of heterosexual students as LGBTQ students are homophobically harassed” (p. 10). Consistent with MacDougall (1998) on “the intense indoctrination in heterosexism that children experience . . . in educational settings” (p. 1), Taylor et al. (2011) emphasize that a fear of social marginalization ensures the

vast majority of students will not intervene when homophobic language is being used.

Many of them have performed a quick calculation of their own: What will happen to me if I speak up? Will they think I’m gay? Will I find ‘Lezbo’ scrawled on my locker? Will rumours start? Will no one hang out with me? And they have decided that the cost of speaking up outweigh the benefits. (p. 11)

Lacking adult role models who consistently contest heterosexist assumptions, attitudes and/or practices, students internalize messages that they “are on their own on this issue and adults won’t help them” (p. 11). The fear that standing up and standing out will lead to them becoming suspect, being outcast or experiencing marginalization, prevents many students from “figuring out that most of their peers aren’t homophobic either” (p. 11). Not rocking the boat to fit in and then “feeling ashamed of themselves for participating in it, or for remaining silent when it was going on” (p. 10), I suggest *Every Class in Every School* supports the earlier reviewed assertion on racism from US President Johnson (1965). Just as all Americans “must

overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice” produced by racism, Canadian students of all sexualities and all genders must overcome the relational paralysis produced when heterosexism remains unchallenged in, at and around schools. As such, *Every Class in Every School* provides a solid Canadian evidence base of the “‘poisoned’ environments created and fostered by acts or omissions that maintain offensive or intimidating climates for study or work” (Toronto District School Board, 2004, p. 4). *Every Class in Every School* also provides evidence of both the myriad opportunities for and barriers to every Canadian student connecting to and learning at every Canadian school. Finally, *Every Class in Every School* confirms that Canadian students expect adults in schools to stand for the safety and well-being of all students by standing against discrimination (Kennedy, 2009b).

US School Climate Research

Similar yet different evidence has been produced by longitudinal and larger sample size⁴⁸ US national school climate research. Conducted biennially since 1999 by the Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), American school climate research confirms the inordinate hostility directed at queer-identified youth relative to their heterosexual-identified peers (Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Kosciw, Diaz & Greytak, 2008; Kosciw et al., 2010, 2012). The GLSEN research bolsters findings from Human Rights Watch that, like their Canadian counterparts, America’s LGBT youth expend such disproportionate energy navigating dangerous terrain that they have little left for learning (Boechenek & Brown, 2001).

⁴⁸ Taylor et al. (2011) conducted research with a “useable sample of 3607 [Canadian] students” (p. 42) whereas Kosciw et al. (2012) analyzed survey results from 8584 US students.

Having generated a research sample in which 30% of participants were in junior high school, Kosciw et al. (2012) point out that “on all of the indicators of school climate⁴⁹ in the survey, middle school students fared worse than high school students and had fewer LGBT-related resources and supports” (p. xix). Though on every surveyed indicator junior high school students report greater sexuality and gender-related victimization, they simultaneously report fewer school-based resources and supports. Perhaps the statistic best illuminating the double-bind of junior high school for queer identified or perceived youth, 6.3% of JHS versus 52.6% of HS students in the US report access to GSAs. Though Blumenthal (1995) foretold the critical, strategic and ethical potential of GSA’s for schools committed to a “mandate of providing the best education possible in a safe and welcoming environment for students of all sexual identities” (p. 212), GSAs remain absent from the very educational settings in which they appear most needed.

The “double-bind” of Junior High School

Though the Canadian research generated no JHS student participation⁵⁰, the double-bind of high vulnerability and low support within the American context mirrors JHS experiences reported by participants in this research. As reported in Hilton (2013) by Arlene, “as far as Katie’s experiences in school, which became my experiences in school, Junior High School (JHS) was hell” (p. 185), or by Ryan, “I hope that homosexuality can actually be talked about in

⁴⁹ From Kosciw et al. (2012): Negative School climate indicators include: frequency of exposure to biased language, feelings of safety, experiences of harassment and assault at school, and willingness to report experiences of victimization to school officials. Positive school climate indicators include presence of: GSAs, anti-homophobia policies, supportive staff and “curricula that are inclusive of LGBT-related topics” (p. xiii).

⁵⁰ From Taylor et al. (2011): Of the over 3700 participants in EGALE’s Canadian school climate research, “the vast majority (91.9%) reported being currently in high school, while 8.1% indicated being out of school or attending a post-secondary institution” (p. 42).

school because I know that going through the sex education system [in JHS] it is just not talked about" (p. 184). Inordinate social preoccupations with sexual and gender conformity combine with hetero-centric curriculum to create a special kind of hell for JHS students. Picking up on Katie's statement that "junior high was just so awkward for everyone though, all of us trying to figure out where we fit and stuff like that", Arlene addresses the contradiction of heightened vulnerability and lack of resources for JHS students:

I mean as far as GLBT issues, its' just not even on the radar in JHS. I can't remember of one instance where a speaker came in or anybody put forward any information through Home and School, through the District or through the Department of Education. At the HS level it was just a really welcoming environment, they did have a GSA group and they did have teachers that were involved. But because JHS is when students are sort of figuring out who they are doesn't it make perfect sense to move all those resources down to a JHS level?

As recent ground-breaking⁵¹ research confirms that institutionalized advantages for sexual and gender conformists begin in elementary school (GLSEN and Harris Interactive, 2012), does it not also make perfect sense to move resources and awareness to the elementary school level? Just as reported by their junior high and high school counterparts, elementary school students "who are bullied regularly at school report lower grades and a lower quality of

⁵¹For being the first of its kind research to examine elementary school student and teacher experiences with and attitudes toward gender, family diversity and school climate, Eliza Bryd (2012), GLSEN's Executive Director, frames *Playgrounds and Prejudice: Elementary School Climate in the United States, A Survey of Teachers and Students* as ground-breaking" (p. 1). I frame the research as "ground confirming", however, as it both corroborates familiar claims that public schools privilege sexual and gender conformity and substantiates the known consequences to learning and engagement when students experience lack of safety and support at school.

life than other students” (p. xvii). Both students and teachers report physical appearance being the basis of most bullying (67% and 70%, respectively). In descending order of frequency, elementary age students report other bases of bullying as: athletic ability (37%), academic performance (26%) and gender conformity (23%). Similarly, teachers report that “students in their school are very often, often or sometimes bullied because of” (p. xvii): academic performance (60%), having a disability (40%), socioeconomic/class distinctions (37%), gender nonconformity for boys (37%) and race/ethnicity (35%). The almost one in ten elementary school students (8%) who self-describe as gender non-conforming are two to three times more likely than self-described gender conforming students to report that classmates spread mean-spirited gossip, rumors and lies about them, both at school and online. Not surprisingly then, self-identified gender non-conformists are less likely than self-identified gender conformists to report feeling very safe at school (42% vs. 61%) and more likely to cite safety concerns as a reason for not wanting to go to school (35% vs. 15%).

That gender variant elementary school students report lower grades, higher stress, less happiness and more fear on account of school-based enforcement of authorized gender roles would come as no surprise to most of the 1,099 US elementary school teachers who participated in the research. Though 83% of teachers agree that “teachers and other school personnel have an obligation to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for students who do not conform to traditional gender norms” (p. xviii), less than half responded positively⁵² when asked whether

⁵² From Figure 4.4, p. 64, in GLSEN and Harris Interactive (2012): 44% of teachers report that gender non-conforming boy students would feel very to somewhat comfortable at their school, 35% report they would feel somewhat to very uncomfortable and 20% reported neutral responses; 49% of teachers report that gender non-

gender variant students would feel comfortable at their school. Despite or even because of first-hand insights and understandings of the school climates confronting gender variant students, only a small majority of teachers believe other “school-level staff would be supportive of efforts that specifically address issues of gender roles, gender stereotypes and non-traditional gender expression” (p. xviii). Interestingly, even fewer than half of teachers believe any such effort would meet with support outside the school, whether at the district-, department- and/or parent-level.

From this sketch of US elementary school life I again conclude that impoverished relational fabrics result in students connecting school with fear. Whether fearing peers or fearing disinterested adults working within a disinterested system, schooling experiences of gender variant elementary school students represent an opportunity for learning institutions to submit socio-political categorisations to the work of thought. Yet most⁵³ ignore or refuse such opportunities and instead embrace status-quo practices of compartmentalizing students based upon anatomy (Chavez, 2013). By recirculating knowledge of ‘appropriately’ gendered colours, toys, clothes or behaviours, elementary schools cement connections between binary gender, binary sex and heterosexuality (Butler, 1999). Putting into practice the heterosexual matrix at the elementary school level simultaneously activates processes of gender discipline and surveillance which cement the cultural unintelligibility of gender outlaw and sexual minority students.

conforming girl students would feel very to somewhat comfortable at their school, 27% report that they would feel somewhat to very uncomfortable and 24% reported neutral responses.

⁵³ Park Day School in Baltimore, MD provides a fascinating exception to this statement. Please see Lee, S. (n.d.): *When it Counts: Talking about transgender identity and gender fluidity in elementary school*.

Deafening Curricular Silence

Consistent with school climate researchers likening schools to socio-cultural police sites whereby pre-defined gender roles and heterosexuality are enforced as though law (Lipkin, 1999), Sadowski (2008) confirmed an almost complete “lack of representation of anything having to do with LGBT people in school curricula” (p. 123). In her analysis of Quebec high-school textbooks, for instance, Temple (2005) found reference to non-heterosexuality both systematically ignored and strategically rendered dubious. Whereas in lessons dealing with everyday relationships of families, friends and workplaces textbook authors routinely “assume the heterosexuality not only of their readers but the rest of the world” (p. 281), textbook authors make routine reference to same-sex sexuality in lessons dealing with sexual disease, abuse, commercialization and exploitation. This combined representation of de-sexualized heterosexuality and sexualized homosexuality throughout Quebec text books facilitates connecting straightness to safety and queerness to danger and cultural negation. This cultural negation was correspondingly reflected in Quebec’s *Personal and Social Education* textbook which lists “trying to prove he is not homosexual” (p. 283) amongst boy’s top reported reasons for engaging in a sexual relationship.

Excerpts from interviews with Ryan and Katie support the conclusions offered by Temple on Quebec curricula. Ryan, spoke both to the invisibility of queerness in the official curriculum and its impact upon his delayed coming-out process:

In my experience teachers don’t talk about homosexuality in school, so you don’t understand and you don’t realize what it all means. Had teachers acknowledged, talked or

taught about me when sex education began in grade six or in some other class, whatever, than I could have come out then and that's what makes me mad.

Seconding Ryan's assertion of official curricular invisibility and reminiscent of Temple (2005), Katie calls attention to queerness being highlighted only in school lessons "warning against the dangers of sex" (p. 288). Katie further suggests that this curricular invisibility exacerbates the need of youth to prove heterosexuality through labeling students 'a queer'⁵⁴:

I can't remember anywhere from grade one to grade 12 when we actually talked in school about GLBT issues. Sure, Melinda⁵⁵ from AIDSPEI came in and talked about safe-sex and how not to catch HIV, STI's and other dangerous stuff. But I'm not talking about schools limiting being gay to having sex. I'm talking about schools being places where all students are encouraged to accept themselves and others as equals. Because we are all Canadians, right? I know something like that would have helped me a whole lot because I felt so alone in Junior High school and like 'oh, I'm the only one, I'm sick, there's something wrong with me.' Of course, I wasn't the only one but that was a lesson schools didn't teach me . . . I pretty much had to learn that lesson myself with help from friends, the internet and then my family. And all those Junior High kids who were so negative to me and obsessed with proving they weren't gay, at least that's what seemed to obsess them, they never got to learn or be exposed to anything different either. I feel bad for them now that I put it that way. Schools left them to fend for themselves too.

⁵⁴ A queer (n) reflects derogatory usage of the term.

⁵⁵ Pseudonym

Both Ryan and Katie suggest ways in which students are impacted by the loud curricular silence on gender and sexual diversity in PEI schools. Ryan could have been out in elementary school, Katie could have concluded sooner that she was not alone and other students could have accepted themselves without first needing to put down classmates. This paradox of learning institutions abetting ignorance of diversity through silence or, as Temple (2005) also indicates, through “negative contexts” (p. 285), supports knowing gender in strict binary terms and positions heterosexuality and heterosexuals as safe and superior. Correspondingly known through unchallenged stereotypes, gender non-conformists and students perceived or identified as other than heterosexual become inferior, less than and, as Temple and Katie attest, dangerous.

Distancing from School

Given, however, the dangerous hostility directed at and experienced by queer-identified students, Grossman et al. (2009) suggested queer youths’ primary coping mechanism to be “distancing themselves from school” (p. 24). Critical examples of this distancing tactic include: higher rates of school absenteeism and truancy relative to heterosexual peers (Bontempo & D’Augelli, 2002; Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Kosciw, Diaz & Greytak, 2008; Kosciw et al. (2010, 2012); negative impact on school performance reflected in lower grades and an inability to focus while at school (Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Kosciw, Diaz & Greytak, 2008; Kosciw et al., 2010, 2012; Murdock & Bolch, 2005); and, reduced aspirations for high-school completion and/or university attendance (Kosciw, 2004; Kosciw & Diaz, 2006; Kosciw, Diaz & Greytak, 2008; Kosciw et al., 2010, 2012). Summarizing the impact of hostile school environments on queer youth’s educational experience, Campos (2005) posits that “rarely do schools contribute positively to gay and lesbian youth’s sexual-identity development, and a

lack of safety, acceptance, and tolerance is sure to prevent some of them from earning a quality education” (p. 23).

Connectedness to School

The large-scale national school climate surveys in Canada and the US also demonstrate that some queer-identified youth report experiencing connectedness to their schools. Wells (2008) referenced positive teacher interventions, inclusive anti-discrimination policies, Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs), queer youth activism, and family support as critical “protective factors . . . [which] enable some youth to overcome tremendous obstacles and still thrive in hostile school environments (p. 20). I now review some of the literature pertaining to these protective factors before then exploring resistance to their implementation in some Ontario Catholic school boards. Finally, I consider recently enacted legislation supportive of student and school administrator efforts to promote healthy, safe and accepting schooling environments.

In studies that surveyed GLBT adolescents and solicited their recommendations and ideas about how to improve schools, a clear message emerged. Students who experienced sexual minority status in high schools asked that teachers and other staff speak out. (Hansen, 2007, p. 845)

Taylor et al. (2011) reported an increased likelihood of adult intervention when staff witness school-based homophobic harassment. This trend may begin to address what Blackburn (2007) asserted as a fundamental need of queer-identified youth: “adult authorities in schools, who may or may not be queer, who may or may not even be accepting of homosexuality, but who are, without question, without neutrality, rejecting of bigotry” (p. 48). Kosciw et al. (2008, 2010, 2012) found that consistent adult rejection of bigotry contributes to enhanced perceptions

of safety, increased connectedness to school and improved academic performance of queer youth. Correspondingly, the absence of consistent adult intervention results in queer-identified students feeling unsafe, devalued, disconnected and alienated from schooling (Grossman et al., 2009; Halley & Campbell, 2006; Hansen, 2007; Wyatt, White, Oswald & Peterson, 2008). A suggested moderation in teachers' historically negative attitudes towards homosexuality (Wyatt et al., 2008) and increased promotions by Canadian teachers' federations to raise awareness of homophobia-related school safety issues (Schneider & Dimito, 2008), might help explain the increasing frequency of anti-homophobia interventions by teachers in Canadian schools.

Inclusive school policies

Both Taylor et al. (2011) and Kosciw et al. (2010, 2012) connect queer youth's positive perceptions of school climate to schools having well-communicated and well-enforced safe schools policies explicitly inclusive of anti-homophobic language. Kennedy (2009b) considered learning environments "much improved" (p. 1) in schools with formal anti-homophobia policies "known to students" (p. 1). Students aware of such policies report: fewer incidents of homophobic harassment; increased frequency of reporting homophobic incidents; greater likelihood of adult intervention in homophobic incidents; and, improved connectedness to school. Goodenow (2006), Hansen (2007) and Grossman (2009) found that antidiscrimination policies inclusive of sexual orientation suggest more favourable schooling outcomes for queer-identified youth. Likewise, Schneider and Dimito (2008) surveyed 132 Ontario teachers and concluded that sexual orientation inclusive anti-discrimination policies result in more frequent interventions by teachers when witness to homophobic harassment. Importantly, teachers in schools with known anti-discrimination policies perceive greater support from administrators to

disrupt homophobia in, at and around schools. A note of caution, however, is that these same Ontario teachers perceive greater support for “dealing with anti-LGBT incidents in comparison to introducing LGBT-related curriculum. In other words, taking action when student safety or human rights are an issue was viewed as being less risky than providing educational opportunities to students, proactively” (p. 66).

Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs)

Developed as an inclusive alliance of students, GSAs emerged “out of the desire of lesbian, gay, bisexual and straight students to create more visible and structural change that might improve the environment of fear, intolerance, and discrimination of LGBT people in which all students existed” (Miceli, 2005, p. 27). Since GSA’s 1988 North-American inception at Concord Academy High School (Concord Academy, 2008) the membership has grown to exceed over 4000 chapters in the U.S. alone (GSA, 2013). Kosciw et al. (2010, 2012) linked schools with GSAs to queer youth reporting: improved feelings of safety; reduced harassment (physical and verbal); increased likelihood of reporting harassment should it occur; reduced school absences; and, enhanced connection to the over-all school community. Reflecting the importance of GSAs as a protective factor for queer-identified youth, Taylor et al. (2011) recommended school administrators strongly support the efforts of students to start GSAs. As foretold by Blumenfeld (1995), GSAs are considered a critical and strategic component for schools committed to a “mandate of providing the best education possible in a safe and welcoming environment for students of all sexual identities” (p. 212).

Resistance to GSAs

Despite research linking school-based GSAs to improved schooling connectedness for queer youth, some school administrators and/or elected school board members outright reject the GSA concept. Dokladalova (2007) wrote of Richmond Hill High School (Ontario) administrators citing “deeply entrenched community views . . . and large Muslim population” (p. 1) as justification for denying the GSA application of student Sean Kaw. Upon Kaw filing a complaint of discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation with the Ontario Human Rights Commission, school administrators reversed course and a GSA is now counted amongst Richmond Hill High School’s roster of official school clubs.

In December 2010, elected trustees of Ontario’s Halton Catholic School District (HCSD) similarly overrode educational research linking GSAs to positive schooling outcomes. Prioritizing Catholic ideology over educational research and student well-being, trustees enacted a District-wide ban on GSAs. Pressed by students, parents and media to explain such blatant disregard for proven student programming, Hahn (2011) reported on trustees reminding the public that Nazi groups and sex clubs are also banned at the HCSD! Returning to Foucault (1982c), that HCSD officials evoked such “mystifying representations” (p. 781) to defend their decision to prohibit GSAs generated considerable public interest. Redirecting his *Toronto Sun* interview on the Canadian airwave ban⁵⁶ of Dire Straits’ original 1985 *Money for Nothing*, television personality Rick Mercer, for one, stated how

⁵⁶ Per Perpetua (2011), the song was deemed “too offensive for Canadian airwaves . . . for the repeated use of an anti-gay slur – “that little faggot” – in its second verse” (para. 1). The ban lasted from January until September of 2011 when a majority of Canadian Broadcast Standards Council panelists concluded “... that there may be

issues like this crowd out real issues of intolerance. In Ontario, the Halton Catholic school board banned the formation of gay-straight alliances in high schools. The chair of the board compared them to Nazi groups. That's something worth talking about. I'm more concerned with helping kids at risk than offending the sensibilities of older people who listen to classic rock stations at work. (QMI Agency, 2011, para. 7)

Under mounting public pressure to accommodate student requests for GSAs, HCDSB trustees approved SIDE⁵⁷ groups which incorporate the GSA-related concerns expressed by Ontario Catholic Education Commission Chair Bishop Durocher (2010). Somehow convinced that “gay-straight alliances imply a self-identification with sexual orientation that is often premature among high school students” (para. 3), Durocher ominously decreed that SIDE groups be “led by staff trained in the guidelines developed by the Institute for Catholic Education (ICE) to assist students of same-sex orientation” (para. 3). Rather remarkable given the context of post-*Vriend* and post-gay marriage Canada, SIDE group assistance includes “exhorting teachers to lead ‘the homosexual student’ toward ‘better sexual morality’” (para. 9).

Queer critical praxis

Not needing an exhorted teacher to lead her to better sexual morality, sixteen year old Leanne Iskander of Mississauga instead led Ontario Catholic student resistance to implementation of the repackaged ban on GSAs (Woo, 2011). Exemplifying what Grace and

circumstances in which even words designating unacceptably negative portrayal [i.e. faggot] may be acceptable because of their contextual usage” (Canadian Press, 2011a, para. 7).

⁵⁷ SIDE is an acronym for Safety, Inclusivity, Diversity and Equity.

Wells (2009) deem the “queer critical praxis of LGBTQ students doing it for themselves” (p. 23), Iskander challenged the people, policies and religious ideologies which prevented her and other students from forming GSAs. Naturally, her challenges provoked resistance. Houston (2011), for instance, wrote of the school principal threatening disciplinary action against Iskander and her parents should she continue to challenge church authority. They chose to ignore the threat and Iskander continued advocating that all students have the right to be who they are in all publically-funded Ontario schools. Many, including Ontario legislators, took note. In June 2012 the Legislative Assembly of Ontario passed Bill 13, the *Accepting Schools Act* (2012). The first⁵⁸ of its’ kind Canadian legislation legislates that neither school boards nor school principals can refuse requests from students to use the name gay-straight alliance. As quoted in Howlett (2012), Education Minister Laurel Broten characterizes Bill 13 as confirmation to Iskander and every student and official in all Ontario public schools that “you can be who you are. You will be safe and accepted at school and the Ontario government supports you in that desire” (para. 3).

The *Marc Hall Prom Predicament* (Grace & Wells, 2005) provided an earlier example of queer-identified youth challenging erasure from relational fabrics at school. Marc Hall of Oshawa, who “had been waiting for my prom since grade nine” (p. 246), was denied the right to attend the 2002 prom with Jean Paul (JP), his boyfriend. According to Marc, Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB) trustees proposed “that if I went to the prom with a girl, and one of my other girlfriends brought JP, we would each have a female date and we could still see

⁵⁸ From CBC News (2013): Manitoba passed similar legislation in September 2013.

other at the prom” (p. 260). Daring to dream more of his prom, Marc alleged his inability to attend with JP a violation of the *Charter* and initiated legal action against both his school and school board. Granting Marc a temporary injunction just two hours before the prom began, Ontario Superior Court Justice MacKinnon (2002) reminded the principal and trustees of their “duty to accord to Mr. Hall the respect that he is due as he attends the prom with his date, his classmates and their dates” (p. 17). Marc recalled arriving at prom to students shouting

“You won!” The principal sat in his chair with his arms crossed. There were some teachers who congratulated me. Most of the students there said they were really happy I fought to take JP. They kept saying how happy they were that I was there.... JP and I danced together and slow danced, just like any normal couple. We kissed just like any normal couple. The prom was worth fighting for, definitely! (p. 258)

Though granted an injunction in a case never taken to trial⁵⁹, I contend that on that night the relational fabric of that particular school community experienced enrichment. I also contend that the national media coverage of Marc taking his stand against negation helped illuminate future possibilities for other Canadian youth. As recounted by Marc,

one day I was sitting in my room doing homework, and I got a phone call from this guy named Pete. He was 14 years old, and he called me to tell me that I was his hero. He wanted to know how to come out to his parents. I told him about my parents. A few weeks later he called again to tell me that he had come out to his mother and that she was

⁵⁹ From Grace & Wells (2005): In 2005 Marc, “deciding that he just wanted to get on with his life” (p. 259), dropped his case against the DCDSB. The Ontario Superior Court of Justice denied a subsequent motion by the DCDSB to have the injunction “officially dissolved” (p. 259).

supportive of him. I told him I was really proud. I said that coming out is a really hard thing to do, but you really have to be true to yourself. (p. 259)

Family support

Supportive families are common denominators in the queer critical praxis of students Sean Kaw, Leanne Iskander and Marc Hall. Wells (2008) positions “welcoming and affirming family relationships as arguably the most important resiliency factor in the lives of all youth, especially sexual and gender minority youth” (p. 20). In the aftermath of high-profile U.S. court case victories, Buckel (2000) likewise indicated that “many more parents” (p. 392) now realize their power to effect positive change in the school lives of their queer-identified children.

Linking parental support to the healthy psychological development of queer-identified adolescents, Goldfried and Goldfried (2001) wrote of parents emerging as change-agents to combat prejudice in and beyond the school environment. Ryan, Huebner, Diaz and Sanchez (2009) found queer youth in supportive familial environments report “significantly lower risk ... related to depression, suicidality, illicit substance use, and risky sexual behavior” (p. 350).

Conducting research with queer-allied parents, Kozik-Rosibal (2000) provided school personnel these recommendations for improving school climates: generate greater awareness of school-based difficulties of students’ perceived or identified as gender non-conforming; provide school staff ongoing training to assist in overcoming the barriers to learning and belonging in schools; include sexual orientation in anti-discrimination policies; support GSAs; and, increase collaboration with queer-identified community-based agencies. Significant US-wide increases in new PFLAG chapters represent a final indicator of emerging parental support for queer-identified youth (PFLAG, 2009). Based on this demonstrated growth PFLAG concludes that

“today’s families, allies and loved ones are organizing and pressing for change as they never have before” (p. 1).

Enactment of Ontario Bill 157, the *Keeping Our Kids Safe at School Act* (2009), demonstrates recognition by Ontario legislators that both school and home safety are integral components of supportive and effective schooling. Passage of the *Act* made Ontario the first Canadian jurisdiction to legislate response and reporting mechanisms, specify roles and responsibilities of school staff and mandate parental notification when children are suspected of being harmed by suspendable⁶⁰ offences. Incorporating awareness of the non-supportive home environments sometimes confronting queer youth, Bill 157 further mandates that parents or guardians not be notified “if in the opinion of the principal doing so would put the pupil at risk of harm from a parent or guardian of the pupil” (p. 2). In such instances the Ontario Ministry of Education (2010) directs school staff to provide student victims with contact information to community-based organizations “offering the appropriate type of confidential support. This could include, for example, a sexual assault centre, Kids Help Phone or the Lesbian Gay Bi Trans Youth Line” (p. 4).

Framing this exception to parental notification as a frontal attack on the rights of religious parents, Craine (2011) decried any policy provision facilitating students receiving “counselling that affirms homosexuality behind their parents back” (para.1). Notwithstanding such protests and reminiscent of the earlier reviewed California legislation to prevent parents from subjecting minor age children to sexual orientation change therapy, passage of Bill 157 points to acceptance

⁶⁰ For detailed information on behaviours constituting a suspendable offence please see *Keeping our kids safe at school: Responding and reporting to incidents* (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 2).

by a majority of Ontario legislators that parents do not possess an unassailable right to subject their child to dehumanizing activities (Daily Mail Reporter, 2012). Though aware of the inevitable socio-cultural limitations of approaching tolerance through legislation (Canadian Press, 2011b), Premier Dalton McGuinty nonetheless represented school safety as an issue of student's rights and student's freedom:

Students should feel free to be who they are at school, regardless of ethnicity, faith, culture, gender or sexual orientation . . . we're not going to pretend that we can somehow reach out into the broader community, into every nook and cranny, but we'll do our very best when it comes to the physical environment of the school itself. (p. 1)

Seconding the position of McGuinty that students ought to feel free to be themselves at school, I close this chapter on North American school climate research by returning to Ryan and Brenda recalling their JHS experiences. After his damaging and disappointing seventh grade, Brenda and Ryan transferred to a JHS at which administrators accepted responsibility for ensuring a safe schooling environment for all students. According to Ryan, his divergent experiences of JHS illustrate how what mattered or not to adults impacted the relational fabrics of his respective schools. Contrasting the intense reactions by staff to mean-spirited rumors of Katie's lesbianism with the non-reactions of staff to his eighth grade "explosion out of the closet", Ryan suggests that at his new school

somehow staff were "dialed" about gay issues. I figure either someone came out there before or else the teachers had really paid attention at some training seminar somewhere. The teachers knew that I knew they knew I was coming-out of the closet (laughs) but they waited for me to come to them rather than them coming to me. They just let me do it

my way because to them it didn't seem to matter. I know that was a problem for my friend Katie at her school . . . where teachers tried to pounce on her and did pounce on her straight friend, Monique. Monique basically had to tell the teacher to mind their own business. Whenever you're treated like that why would people ever expect you to be open with them?

Embodying the characteristic willingness of Generation Queer and their supportive families to challenge pedagogical negation (Wells, 2012), Brenda addresses the ongoing need for both vigilance and teamwork when safeguarding students' equal access to educational opportunities:

So right after Ryan's coming out in eighth grade, all of a sudden out of the blue his teacher is threatening not to take him on the school trip to the Magdalen Islands. I remember meeting with administrators and asking: look, is this about Ryan's sexuality? Is he now not welcome on the trip because he's gay? Absolutely not, they replied. From their perspective I think just by putting it out there Ryan was going on that trip, which he did and everything worked out really well. Ryan has great memories of that trip and for the next year's trip to the Holocaust Museum, the first of its kind for kids on PEI, there was not a peep of concern from anyone in a position of authority . . . that trip really opened up Ryan's and his classmates eyes to history and issues of diversity and acceptance. The Nazis exterminated homosexuals too, right? Ryan and his classmates came back so excited and inspired about everything they did and saw. (Hilton, 2013, p. 189).

Literature Review Summary

This literature review provided a summary of contemporary school climate which confronts both students and parents in North America. The reviewed examples of queer critical praxis by Ryan and Brenda on PEI and by Sean Kaw, Leanne Iskander, Marc Hall and their parents in Ontario suggest that the greater rights and responsibilities of citizenship now accorded to queer-identified Canadian adults may be trickling down to queer-identified Canadian youth. Yet past medico-legal discourses which framed same-sex desire as criminal and pathological seem to retain unofficial hold in both the relational and curricular realms of public schooling. From elementary to junior high on through to high school, both North American school climate research and this research lend credence to assertions by Grace and Wells (2009) that “school culture and the larger Canadian culture lag behind legislation and the law in its [queer] inclusive approach” (p. 28).

Given that the historical focus of public schooling has “been about preserving the status quo and tradition” (p. 29), it should not be news to educators and school administrators that schools on PEI, like schools elsewhere, are often unsafe sites for students because of sexual orientation and because of gender non-conformity. It may be news, however, that a majority of straight-identified Canadian students indicate the surveillance and discipline of sex, gender and sexuality stereotypes detract from both the school and learning experiences. Nor is it or should it be news that fear at, about or on the way to and from school will often negatively impact a student’s level of engagement, academic performance and educational aspirations. Yet though aware of such predictable realities and though simultaneously claiming to both cherish individual differences (ELSB, 2005) and provide students equal access to educational success (DEECD,

2006), no PEI school board consented to participate in the controlled conditions component of Canada's first national survey of homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. As a result of declining the invitation to participate in the research, no PEI school board gained access to research findings on students' senses of safety or freedom to be who they are at school. That the embrace and promotion of such educational research instead fell upon Brenda, Arlene and PFLAGPEI is, to me, newsworthy. I use this news to now set the stage for structuring the concluding discussion chapter of high school experiences around this question: Is the PEI education system doing its very best to ensure the freedom of all students to safely be who they are while at school?

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

I start this discussion chapter with excerpts from my interview with Brenda as we discussed her anxiety returning as Ryan transitioned from a supportive junior high school (JHS) into high school (HS). So as to theorize teachers' fears that professional suicide results from coming out as an advocate for queer youth I re-introduce Foucault's (1978) notion of competing discourses. Disabusing discourse of fixed, predictable singularity allows me to consider the surprising ease with which PEI's first Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) came to be. Focusing elsewhere than upon repression, victimization, negative curricular contexts and impoverished relational fabrics, I explore practices of freedom in order to characterize participants' overwhelmingly positive HS experiences. I then analyze instances in which Ryan was rendered unintelligible relative to sanctioned HS relationships. In conjunction with problematizing the relational fabric limitations imposed upon Ryan and his friends, I introduce the human rights principle of the duty to accommodate to the point of undue hardship (PEI Human Rights Commission, 2010) by presenting this quote from Brenda:

I sat on the PFLAGPEI panel at the PEI Teacher's Federation annual convention when Ryan had just started high school. After the presentation I was approached by a young teacher who was really interested in the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) initiatives that can be set up in schools. She expressed terror at bringing her idea to school administration because she didn't yet have tenure. I thought 'now this is truly ridiculous, a young teacher who wants to confront homophobia but feels she can't for perceived job-security reasons'. I decided to do what I could to make sure such perceptions did not characterize Ryan's high school experience. So I pulled together information on GSAs and arranged

an appointment with Ryan's high school principal. I admit to kind of half-assing Ryan's permission before seeing his new principal but I was not about to risk a repeat of grade seven and Ryan again losing out on an education. So it turns out that prior to our meeting a couple female teachers, including the one from the convention, had already sold the principal on the GSA concept. So the principal basically embraced what I said and soon that terrified young teacher and another colleague were working with Ryan and the others to implement a GSA. Looking back I consider this an example of how status-quos get maintained through fearing a big bad ghost that sometimes just isn't there. (Brenda)

PEI's first GSA

I contend that by confronting the "big bad ghost that wasn't there" with regards to advocating for a GSA, the two female teachers demonstrated a critical lesson on and about discourse as theorized by Foucault (1978). That their GSA advocacy did not jeopardize career security suggests discourse being neither a fixed nor universal method of constraint but rather a "... complex and unstable process ... an instrument and effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy" (p. 100). In this instance I characterize the starting point for the teacher's opposing strategy as an ethical refusal to remain silent given professional obligations "to provide curricular and co-curricular programs that are affirming, inclusive, and responsive to the student population" (ELSB, 2011b, p. 1). Though applauding the fact that the GSA concept was embraced by the principal at this particular school, I nonetheless evoke Foucault (1978) to position as "a point of resistance" (p. 100) Brenda's contention that is "truly ridiculous" for educational professionals to perceive anti-

homophobia programming as controversial. Seconding her assertion and as a “starting point for an opposing strategy” (p. 100), I ask: How do routine expectations of affirmation, inclusion and responsiveness transform into controversy when applied to the schooling lives and outcomes of queer youth?

Maybe high school will turn out OK

Unlike the teachers, Brenda did not risk career advancement to challenge status-quo maintenance of the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1999; Grace & Wells, 2009). Rather, Brenda confronted the knowledge of Ryan and his education being amongst the collateral damage should teachers succumb to perceptions of administrator antipathy towards supporting queer youth in school. Dreading a repeat of Ryan’s lost seventh year, Brenda recalled that as Ryan transitioned into high school her anxieties about school safety returned because

Ryan would be mixed back in with the kids from his first junior high. So a couple of weeks into grade ten, Ryan came home from school saying ‘Mom you’ll never guess what Vance⁶¹ did today’. Vance was one of the kids from Ryan’s first junior high who made his life hell so I’m thinking here we go again, right? But what happened was that Vance waited around after school to talk with Ryan and apologize for what an asshole he had been to him in grade seven. To top it off, Vance told Ryan how much he admired him for having the courage to be himself. He could not have given Ryan any better gift than that. And he gave me a gift, too, because that’s when I first allowed myself to start thinking that maybe things are going to be OK after all. (Brenda)

⁶¹ Pseudonym

I suggest this gift for both Ryan and Brenda from Vance for both Ryan and Brenda is similar in message to both research findings as reported by Canadian students and the work of thought and practices of freedom as theorized by Foucault (1984b). That Vance transformed himself from a former adversary into an acknowledged fan of Ryan's makes visible the work of thought "being freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem" (p. 117). I also contend that having established his homophobic doings as a problem worthy of reflection, Vance exemplifies the inter-connectedness which exists between thought, practices of freedom and the relational fabric. Whereas without question he once condemned Ryan as a threat deserving of punishment, Vance later celebrates Ryan as a personal inspiration for displaying courage to be himself at school.

I suggest that it was his work on first securing space for critical reflection that enabled Vance to develop new thoughts which then afforded him space to act anew to identify admiration for what he once deemed punishable. As this critical reflection centered upon how he related to both self and other, I represent this evolution within Vance as an ethical exercise. For Foucault (1984a), practices of freedom and ethics are inextricably linked. As clarified in one of his many informative interviews, "for what is ethics, if not the practice of freedom, the conscious practice of freedom? Ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection" (p. 284). That through this reflective work Vance began to free himself from the restrictive dictates of the heterosexual matrix, I position his ethical demonstration as one possible way forward for the many Canadian students who report being ashamed of themselves for contributing to or failing to disrupt homophobic schooling environments (Taylor et al., 2011).

Finally, in this way I represent ethics and practices of freedom as critical ingredients within the recollections on HS from Katie, Ryan, Arlene and Brenda. Finally, I ask how do we engage-en masse – student practices of freedom in neo-liberal technological modernity?

High School, ethics and practices of freedom

I now explore the overwhelmingly positive experiences of and connections to the HS relational fabric as reported by all four research participants. Their glowing recollections of this final stage in the public education system encourage that I focus elsewhere than upon reports of repression and negative curricular contexts continuing to characterize sexuality-related discourses within institutions of schooling. Instead I highlight strategies deployed by Katie, Ryan, Arlene and Brenda to both resist negation and produce intelligibility. As such, I connect participants' recollections of positive HS experiences to the protective factor that Wells (2012) identified as a “critical ingredient in helping to build the resiliency of sexual and gender minority youth” (para. 19): supportive families, friends and teachers.

In all honesty I never experienced anything negative as a result of my sexual orientation in High School. I'm sure that there were people in the school who didn't like me because I was gay but I just didn't care. I didn't have any need to associate myself with those types of people. (Katie)

In High School Katie never seemed to be on the blunt edge of homophobia. She just sort of got to a point that she just accepted herself for who she was. I can't think of one instance in HS where Katie's being gay was an issue but JHS was another kettle of fish. For me, when she went to high school I just wanted her to feel safe and cared for so she

could put her energies into learning. Thankfully, her teachers and core group of friends also wanted the same for her. (Arlene)

Except for a couple stupid episodes like the canoe trip⁶² and gym class, I consider my High School experience as pretty ideal. (Ryan)

High School turned out really positive for Ryan. They did the GSA for a while and came out more as a group. After that Ryan got to the point where he became tired of being ‘Ryan the gay guy’. He wanted to be the ‘creative Ryan’, the ‘thoughtful Ryan’, the ‘loyal friend Ryan’. He wanted to be more than a label. (Brenda)

Katie: Challenging norms

The collective consideration of HS as being pretty ideal and much less homophobic than JHS suggests that many students and teachers participated in and contributed to queering the relational fabric at this PEI school. Katie, for one, connected her smooth transition to HS from the “hell of junior high” to the seeming disinclination of HS students’ to

... pick people apart for being different. At least the students I surrounded myself with didn’t. We were completely comfortable with each other which made me feel more comfortable with myself. It gave me the freedom to basically dress the way I wanted to, wear the hair styles I wanted to ... I was completely open and up front about it. In high school it seemed people understood that difference exists. I had cool teachers in high school too which really helped. They were clearly more prepared to teach and relate to

⁶² For detailed consideration of Ryan’s HS canoe trip experiences see Hilton (2013) found in Tilleczek, K., Ferguson, B. (Ed.), *Youth, education, and marginality. Local and global expressions*. (pp. 177-193).

diverse students than the junior high teachers I had.... Appearing so-called normal somehow just became a whole lot less important for students and teachers in high school.

In Katie's statement we see that for her freedom includes being 'completely open and up front' about dressing as she wishes and wearing hair styles of her choosing. At first glance one might forgive this question: How do such seemingly inconsequential personal expressions as hairstyle and wardrobe represent aspects of freedom and ethics? To connect Katie's hair and clothing choices to practices of freedom and ethics I recall earlier introduced U.S.-based school climate research by Human Rights Watch (HRW) (2001). The HRW research concludes that "the entrenched societal prejudice against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth is based on rigidly enforced rules dictating how girls and boys should look, walk, talk, dress, act, think and feel" (Conclusion section). From this report we understand hair-style and clothing choices as representing much more than one's personal style or financial capacity. Rather, we see that mundane choices in hair and clothes are integral components to sustaining the heterosexual matrix. As the HRC report elaborates, the "social regime in most schools is unforgiving. Youth who break these rules will be punished" (ibid). Despite the threat that she would be punished for violating established connections between hair, clothes and 'proper' gender, Katie chose otherwise than what is expected within most HS social regimes. Following Oksala (2005), "this moment of the unexpected as opposed to the normalized, the unforeseen as opposed to the determined" (p. 188) underlies my contention that Katie's hair and clothing choices exemplified critical reflection and practices of freedom.

Like daughter Katie's newfound freedom to challenge normalization and present herself to the world as she wished and desired, Arlene experienced freedom by joining up with like-

minded parents to advocate for students' equal access to positive schooling outcomes. According to Arlene the PEI chapter of Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAGPEI) proved

a wonderful organization and support system. PFLAG was great for us parents who feared our kid's right to schooling, and all other kid's too, might be threatened by homophobia and heterosexism. The Malones and Kendricksons [among founding members of PFLAGPEI] did great work raising awareness.

For Arlene, PFLAG helped fill the deafening void of silence that exists in PEI schools surrounding topics of genders and sexualities. Arlene feared this pedagogical silence would threaten Katie's connectedness to schooling and negatively impact upon both her immediate schooling experience and future academic dreams. Arlene hypothesized that a likely source of this pedagogical silence stems from "the dominant role of the Catholic Church on PEI which means sexuality remains way too hot a political potato to address ... it's sad to say." Adding weight to our theorizing discourse as 'constant conflict', Arlene valued PFLAG "... talking about things that weren't being talked about ... which is really important because, in my book, new thinking begins to emerge only after old thinking gets challenged". Arlene summarized the combined support and advocacy focus of PFLAG as

... being supported by others going through similar things and keeping our eyes and ears open to what was going on. Because we read and talked about the school research we knew that gay and lesbian kids without supportive parents have the hardest times in school. So we just plain advocated for parents to love and support their kids and schools to practice what they preach about being respectful of all students. It still breaks my heart

to think about how difficult it must be at school and at home for kids, whether out or closeted or whatever, without parental support ... we just didn't think that it has to be so difficult for anyone.

Beyond reinforcing the notion of discourse being characterized by constant conflict, Arlene simultaneously exposes what I consider to be a 'hot potato' methodological limitation of this research: The absence of PEI parents voicing opposition to my assertion that children ought to feel free to safely be who they are at school. Absent as these voices may be from this research, I recognize these parental voices exist and exert such influence that some teachers and school administrators continue to identify sexual and gender diversity with controversy (Froese-Germain & Riel, 2013). Joining with Arlene, I bemoan the fact that the label 'controversial' acts to silence useable research on parental support for queer youth improving schooling connectedness (Grace & Wells, 2009) and health outcomes (Ryan et al., 2009). It breaks my heart, too, that some parents, rather than challenge their own thinking, insist it is within their parental rights to impose 'cures' upon same-sex attracted or gender nonconforming children (Livio, 2013). Finally, it also breaks my heart that some parents would disown their own children before disowning adherence to the heterosexual matrix (Pope & Wayman, 2007).

What I consider controversial is that school officials enable non-supportive parents to dictate the terms of controversy⁶³ in schools. Correspondingly, I consider it controversial that homophobic parents exert influence over what teachers do and do not teach and how or not

⁶³ For example, PEI Department of Education and Early Childhood Development curriculum documents for grades 6-9 Health state that "sexual health [and sexuality-related] outcomes may only be taught with written permission from parents/guardians". From my research of curriculum documents this is the lone instance in PEI education which so elevates parents above educators (though informal conversations with some PEI teachers suggest an unwritten policy exists allowing parents to withdraw children from classes dealing with the theory of evolution).

relational fabrics are problematized at school. I represent as the antithesis of controversy, however, parental support for the right of children to safely be who they are at school. I also represent as non-controversial that parents instinctively expect their children to be similarly supported at school by teachers, administrators and staff. I need look no further than ELSB (2011a) policies to find support for such understandings of non-controversial schooling. For how else can we interpret the policy expectation that “student and parent conduct will demonstrate care for themselves, for each other and for their school and staff” (p. 1)?

School locker rooms: Beyond the duty to accommodate?

The change rooms are the scariest place. That girl, I’ll call her V, was in my gym class last semester and after she came out she had to change in the gym teacher’s office. She wasn’t allowed to change with us because supposedly she would want to stare at us and molest us and shit. She never could shower after gym class, so people said she was smelly and stuff. (Canadian HS student, Taylor et al., 2011, p. 79)

Findings from school climate research confirm that the majority of Canadian students, regardless of where they locate themselves on the spectrums of sex, gender and sexuality, identify locker rooms as the most dangerous place in Canadian schools for students perceived or identified as queer (Taylor et al., 2011). Being that school locker rooms present a likelihood of someone at some point being naked, I question whether locker rooms represent that point at which sexual or gender diversity ought not be accommodated by students, parents, teachers or administrators. Known in human rights parlance as the point of undue hardship (PEI Human Rights Commission, 2010), or the point at which discriminatory treatment becomes justifiable because a duty to accommodate individual differences would place “an unreasonable burden on

the employer” (p. 14), public service provider or others, I ask: given the likelihood for nakedness, do expectations of non-discriminatory school locker rooms place unreasonable burdens upon students, parents or school staff? Also, how would expectations of non-discriminatory locker rooms represent undue hardship? To help address this scenario and these questions I turn to Ryan and Brenda recounting their confrontation with homophobia in the HS locker room. Finally and to help illustrate my recognition that both discrimination and non-discrimination occur in relationships, I turn for inspiration to these words spoken by Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960): “you never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... Until you climb into his skin and walk around in it” (p. 30).

Ryan: Turning the tables

Sure there was a lot of homophobia in the changing room. It was an all-boys gym class which definitely didn't help my situation and there would just be a ton of homophobic remarks. I know that the gym teacher knew about it but he tried to let on that he didn't ... you see he didn't want to get the homophobic students in trouble because they were the jocks on the school sports teams. So I remember that a lot of the time I just wouldn't go to gym class. I would instead go to the cafeteria and just sit with my friends who had a free period. So basically I skipped class every single day for a month and almost failed because of it. So the gym teacher tells me that in order to pass gym I need to write him an essay about what I would have done differently and that he would read it when the two of us met with a school administrator. I went and wrote the essay and basically said that I had absolutely no regrets in anything that I did. I felt that it was an unsafe place for me to

be and that for me to even think about going back I would first need to know what he would do differently. You see I flipped it around because I know student safety is supposed to be the number one priority for teachers. Besides, if my safety wasn't an issue for him, it certainly was for me. So, anyways, he and the administrator both read the essay and then the gym teacher completely pretends as if he had no idea that there was any homophobia going on. He was so apologetic and then went on to tell me that at the start of every single gym year with the grade 10's that he was going to sit down with them and talk about diversity. Not just about homosexuality but about being black, Chinese, blah blah blah ... he just gave me this big bullshit and that pretty much pissed me off even more. I was so frustrated that he pretended like he didn't know what was going on when we both knew he did. I find that so immature. The administrator just kind of sat there and nodded but didn't contribute to solving the problem. I passed gym, thank God, but the whole thing just really frustrated me.

Brenda, for her part, remembered

dealing with the gym thing and Ryan getting in trouble for showing up unprepared. So I again ended up at the school to have a meeting with the gym teacher and an administrator. Ryan didn't go with me, I can't remember if he refused to go or didn't want to. I don't know. But I remember asking them if they considered how it feels to be a gay guy in gym class and in the locker room and all that? Well talk about an uncomfortable conversation to try to have with two men. I think the gym teacher got it. I'm not sure that the administrator understood it but together they agreed to do a few things and make some changes.

As I return to the hypothetical exercise of locating the point of undue hardship in school locker rooms and in order to attempt understanding the homophobic behaviours of the school jocks, I first evoke the admonitions on empathy of both Brenda and Atticus Finch to ask: How would it feel to be in the skin of a straight guy as he shared a HS locker room with a gay guy? Might a straight guy feel vulnerable to or fearful of being “stared at and molested and shit” by an out gay student in the locker room? Absolutely, I would answer, if the straight student believes such stereotypes as queers molest youth or, as framed earlier by Brenda, “that if you're gay then all of a sudden every guy [or girl] around you is not safe.” I predict failure for any such representation of undue hardship, however, given that the DEECD (2006) claims PEI public education challenges students to “become aware of and transcend their own stereotypical attitudes and behaviours” (p. 13). Having discounted regurgitated stereotypes as a viable basis for claiming that the presence of gay students in locker rooms surpasses the point of undue hardship, I now attempt to empathize with the gym teacher to ask: Might the related needs of keeping jocks out of trouble so as to compete for sports championships place unreasonable burdens upon gym teachers for ensuring student safety in locker rooms? Given that the ELSB (2011a) does not exempt gym teachers from the expectation that all staff report “all incidents which adversely affect a safe and caring learning environment” (p. 2), I again predict that it would be difficult for any gym teacher to sustain such an understanding of undue hardship.

Disregard for the Duty to Care

Having just suggested that neither locker rooms nor desired athletic results represent adequate justification for negating our shared duty to accommodate difference to the point of undue hardship, I now suggest that failure to confront homophobia does negate the principle of

the Duty of Care (ELSB, 2011a). For example, how did the gym teacher or the jocks “demonstrate regard, concern and respect for the unique differences and worth of the individual” (p. 1)? How did they “demonstrate diligent effort ... to ensure safe and caring learning environments” (p. 1)? Though unable to come up with an affirmative response for either question, I can affirm that the gym teacher demonstrated regard for Ryan’s right of “due process” (p. 2). Upon assigning Ryan a make-up essay so that he might pass gym class, however, the gym teacher and principal exposed themselves to much more than a student and parent seeking a pass in gym class.

I suggest that by framing class attendance as the exclusive responsibility of students, the gym teacher inadvertently provoked a face-to-face confrontation with Generation Queer (Wells, 2012). As a member of the “new generation of queer youth who have the knowledge, support and confidence to speak out against homophobia and transphobia” (para.3), Ryan, supported by Brenda, understood safety at school to be a responsibility shared by the entire school community (ELSB, 2011a).

As such, they also understood that quality schooling rests upon there being “trust and confidence in the commitment and competencies among the staff to improve the quality of the student’s school experience” (p. 1). So how is it that any committed, competent gym teacher could be shocked to learn that locker rooms are particularly rife for homophobic behaviours? Indeed, if Ryan is correct in that it was pretend shock, what improved schooling experiences can be expected from promised enhancements to future student’s awareness of and respect for diversity? Finally, I paraphrase Brenda and ask of all adults in all PEI schools: Have you ever for

a moment imagined what it's like to be a sexual or gender minority youth in gym class or in the locker room or, for that matter, anywhere else in school? If not, why not?

Though undoubtedly causing discomfort for some and likely categorized as controversial by others, I suggest such questions, grounded as they are in empathy, represent the spirit of both the duty to accommodate to the point of undue hardship and the foundational principle of the Duty to Care. Slightly adding to my earlier position, I suggest that if teachers and administrators “are not willing to take this time, [to empathize with and] to accept all students as they are, and to create safety for all students in their care, then maybe teaching is not the best career choice for them” (Turnbull & Hilton, 2010, para. 15). It is important I acknowledge that it was the work of Ryan and Brenda which prompted the gym teacher and administrator to step into the skin of queer youth and consider schooling from their perspectives. Though of little practical benefit to Ryan's educational experience of gym and though perhaps nothing more than ‘big bullshit’, that the gym teacher promised to better address diversity with future students suggests his assuming ethical accountability for the safety of all students in his care. Furthermore, the gym teacher appears to have assumed accountability for submitting to the work of thought both the school's relational fabric and its impact upon the opportunities for students to learn at and connect to school.

Summary

I recall undertaking this research with the specific intention of exploring the High School (HS) experiences of out queer youth and their families. I now recognize that this intention reflected generational bias and lacked any substantive critical reflection on discourses circulated by Robinson (2006) which frame PEI as “consistently conservative” (para. 2). Interpreting

“consistently conservative” into the assumption that youth today experience gayness in the same way and in much the same context as I did in the early 1980’s, led to erroneously thinking that somehow PEI was immune to significant queer-related cultural developments. In effect, I brought into this research the suspicions of time standing still since my own closeted PEI schooling experiences. Foucault’s work and lens gave another way to examine and interpret this simplistic conclusion.

The degree to which research participants exposed my faulty reasoning reinforces Savin-Williams’ (2005) warning to researchers that “we can’t know about these adolescents’ lives by looking at the experiences of their older gay brothers and sisters” (p. 14). Further opening my eyes to generational bias was the surprising degree to which Ryan, Katie, Arlene and Brenda focused our interviews on JHS experiences. That I was so surprised reinforces my contention that the significance of this thesis lay in its’ introducing the heretofore missing voices, perspectives and questions of out queer youth and their parents to other students, parents, educators, researchers, policy-makers and elected officials.

I recognize that not all queer youth can safely be who they are at home, let alone at school. As a result, I recognize that the stories of Katie and Ryan may not readily transfer to the stories of school and of home for other queer youth. Such unfortunate recognition, however, does not negate the significance of supportive relationships at home and school enabling Katie and Ryan to resist their encounters with pedagogical and relational negation. Though far from possessing universal generalizability, their stories help illustrate what supportive schooling for out queer youth on PEI looks like. Furthermore, I suggest their stories help illustrate that controversy need not define the schooling experiences of out queer youth. For instance, how

could it be considered controversial that Arlene told Katie to “just go do your thing and know that I’m in your corner?” Then again, how could it be considered controversial that Katie responded to the support of both family and friends by making good upon her vow that “high school would not be a repeat of the hell of junior high?” Finally, how could it be controversial for Ryan and Brenda to respectively report that at his second JHS “somehow staff were ‘dialed’ about gay issues” and “we could not have asked for better support?”

That I position their stories of supportive relationships as non-controversial does not imply the inevitability of schooling connectedness for out queer youth. Rather, I suggest their reports of schooling connectedness demonstrate the centrality of the work of thought to enriched relational fabrics. Having submitted stereotypes to the work of thought, for instance, Katie’s JHS friends could then confidently exclaim that “they just didn’t care if people thought they were gay” because of being seen with her at *PridePEI*. Conversely, their stories demonstrate the likelihood of schooling disconnectedness when stereotypes are not submitted to the work of thought. For example, I suggest that upon bemoaning their powerlessness to positively impact the relational fabric at Ryan’s first JHS, school administrators legitimized the very stereotypes that they are ethically and pedagogically obligated to challenge and, as a result, condemned “happy, joyful Ryan to being torn apart.” Likewise, that JHS administrators chose to accommodate students who spread throughout school their fears of being raped by Katie further suggests that impoverished relational fabrics thrive when and where the work to thought is not practiced.

Having positioned the work of thought as a practice encourages positioning freedom, too, as a practice. I suggest that by deciding to transfer once they realized his first “school’s issues

with diversity were not being taken seriously,” Brenda and Ryan simultaneously illustrate the inextricable relationship between the work of thought and practices of freedom. Though dismayed by administrator’s unwillingness to address the personal and academic consequences to Ryan of the school’s relational fabric, Ryan and Brenda never forgot that schooling could and should be otherwise. As when Katie returned from her “nightmare” of a school trip newly committed to liberating herself from the normalized expectations of others, so too Ryan and Brenda committed themselves to realizing their expectation of building effective partnerships with school personnel. I now close this thesis by returning to Arlene’s hope “that something really positive may finally come from our sharing some very difficult experiences”. Though unable to divine the future, I can categorically state that the experiences of schooling as shared by Katie, Ryan, Arlene and Brenda exemplify positivity. Being that the work of thought illuminates their schooling experiences and practices of freedom fuel their relationships, I can also categorically declare a need for more local research into the diverse lives of art being lived right here amongst Generation Queer.

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APPENDIX A – GATEKEEPER LETTER

Alana Leard, Youth Out-Reach Coordinator, ARCPEI
Ray Malone, Former President, PFLAGPEI

October 1, 2009

Dear Alana & Ray,

My name is Tom Hilton and I am a Masters student in UPEI's Faculty of Education Leadership in Learning Program. As part of my degree requirements I must complete a research project or thesis. My project is entitled *"Out": Schooling Experiences of Openly Queer Youth and Their Parents on Prince Edward Island*. My research endeavour is guided by beliefs that all students have the right to safe, affirming public educations and all parents expect public schools to provide environments conducive to learning. I feel it is time to conduct the first PEI-based research from the perspectives of out PEI youth and their parents. I hope you both agree and will assist me in securing participants for this research.

Included are copies of an information letter I hope you will distribute to potential participants. Specifically, I seek two out 2009 graduates and their parents from PEI's Eastern School District interested in sharing views, opinions, and stories of educational experiences.

I aim to conduct hour-long audio-taped one-on-one interviews in October, 2009 and conduct another hour-long follow-up interview with each participant in December, 2009. Specific interview locations and times will be negotiated to satisfy convenience of participants.

Please contact either of my project advisors at the Faculty of Education, Dr. Fiona Walton or Dr. Khym Goslin, if you have any questions about the project. Dr. Walton may be reached at 902-566-0351 or by e-mail at fwalton@upei.ca and Dr. Goslin may be reached at 902-620-5074 or by e-mail at kgoslin@upei.ca.

Please contact the UPEI Research Ethics Board at 902-566-0637 or by e-mail at lmacphee@upei.ca if you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, Alana and Ray. I am available at 902-894-4241 (home) or by e-mail at thilton@upei.ca should you wish to discuss this research endeavour. I very much look forward to hearing from you both and getting started on this important work.

Sincerely,

Thomas V. Hilton

APPENDIX B – INFORMATION LETTER

My name is Tom Hilton and I am a Masters student in UPEI's Faculty of Education Leadership in Learning Program. As part of my degree requirements I must complete a research project or thesis. This project is entitled *"Out": Schooling Experiences of Openly Queer Youth and Their Parents on Prince Edward Island*. This research endeavour is guided by my beliefs that all students have the right to safe, affirming public educations and all parents expect public schools to provide environments conducive to their child's learning. My aim is to conduct the first PEI-based research from the perspectives of out youth and their parents and I hope you are interested in participating in this research.

I seek two out 2009 graduates and their parents from PEI's Eastern School District interested in sharing views, opinions, and stories of educational experiences. I will conduct hour-long audio-taped one-on-one interviews in October, 2009 and conduct another hour-long follow-up interview with each participant in December, 2009. Specific interview locations and times will be negotiated to satisfy participants' convenience. Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary, and you may stop your participation at any time without penalty or prejudice. The final report of this research study will be used to defend my thesis which is a requirement of the Master's of Education Program. This event is open to the public and you are invited to attend. Participants will also receive a short summary of the findings from the final report.

For participants wishing to remain anonymous you will be identified by a fake name of your choice in the final report. For participants wishing to self-identify you will be identified by your first name in the final report. Further discussion of this option will occur at the outset of your initial interview with Tom. References to individuals and institutions by participants will be blurred to protect their anonymity as well. Only project supervisors, Drs. Fiona Walton and Khym Goslin, and I will have access to the data resulting from this research study. All data resulting from this research study will be retained at the University of Prince Edward Island for at least five years after the study at which time all data will be destroyed. However, the audio recording will be destroyed immediately after data analysis is complete and the transcription has been reviewed and accepted by the participant. The final report will include emerging themes around schooling experiences of out youth and their parents and quotes from participants reflecting their views, opinions, and stories.

As part of the legal requirements, you should also be aware that under the "duty to disclose" law, I am obligated to report any disclosure of abuse or neglect of a child or adult in need of protection, should such a disclosure occur during the research study. If you are interested in participating in this research study or have any questions, please contact me at (902) 894-4241 or by email at thilton@upei.ca. You may also direct questions about the project to either of my project advisors at UPEI's Faculty of Education, Dr. Fiona Walton or Dr. Khym Goslin. Dr. Walton may be reached at (902) 566-0351 or by e-mail at fwalton@upei.ca and Dr. Goslin may be reached at (902)-620-5074 or by e-mail at kgoslin@upei.ca. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of this study, please contact Lynn McPhee of the UPEI Research Ethics Board at (902) 566-0637 or by email at lmacphee@upei.ca.

Sincerely, Thomas V. Hilton

APPENDIX C - INFORMED CONSENT

I, (Participant inserts printed name here), volunteer to participate in the research project "*Out*": *Schooling Experiences of Openly Queer Youth and Their Parents on Prince Edward Island*. I understand the project's purpose is to explore educational experiences from the perspectives of two out Prince Edward Island youth and their parents. I reviewed the information letter, interview guide and informed consent protocols. I understand my research role and the potential benefit for increasing awareness of schooling issues confronted by openly queer PEI youth and their families. I have been encouraged to ask questions throughout the research process.

(Participant inserts initials and date here)

I, (Participant inserts printed name here), consent to being audio-taped during two hour-long one-on-one interviews with Tom Hilton, University of Prince Edward Island's (UPEI) Masters of Education student. Interview times, dates and locations will be negotiated to satisfy my convenience. I understand the purpose of the second interview is to review accuracy of transcripts and data collected during the first interview. I may choose to receive a copy of my interview transcripts. Only Tom Hilton, Drs. Fiona Walton and Khym Goslin of UPEI's Faculty of Education have access to data resulting from my research participation. I understand research data will be securely maintained at UPEI for the five year period following project completion and all data will be destroyed at that time. I consent to use of quotations from my interviews in the research write-up. I will receive a copy of the finished thesis. (Participant inserts initials and date here)

I, (Participant inserts printed name here), have reviewed options of identity disclosure and confidentiality pertaining to my research participation. I am aware of the inability, particularly in small research locales like PEI, to guarantee participant confidentiality via pseudonyms and blurred personal details. I understand that the information will be kept confidential within the limits of the law. I freely choose to allow the researcher to: identity disclose (____) retain confidentiality (____). I may change this choice at any time throughout the research process. My earlier consent to the use of interview quotations will reflect this disclosure/confidentiality selection. (Participant inserts initials and date here)

Should I, (Participant inserts printed name here), experience unanticipated anxiety as a result of my research participation I know to immediately consult gatekeepers Ray Malone and Alana Leard. I possess complete contact information for Tom Hilton, Drs. Fiona Walton and Khym Goslin, and UPEI's Research Ethics Board. I have the freedom to withdraw at any time for any reason. I have the freedom to not answer any question. (Participant inserts initials and date here)

To be signed by researcher:

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study, and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

(Researcher inserts signature here)

(Researcher dates document here)

(Tom Hilton, M. Ed. Student

Phone: (902) 894-4241

email: thilton@upei.ca)

APPENDIX D – STUDENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

This is a conversation. The questions we have here will help guide this conversation. I encourage you to ask me questions, too. Feel free to share specific stories as we talk our way through this conversation. Should you at any time during the conversation wish to not answer a question, end the conversation or prefer the audio-tape be turned off please let me know. Are we ready?

- 1) What was your experience as an out student in your school?
How did you feel in the school? What did you think about the school?
How did you learn in the school? How did you live in the school?

- 2) What is it about your school that enabled you to be ‘out’?
Tell me about specific things, places, spaces, people, classes that supported your being ‘out’.
What school policies are you aware of in place to support queer youth?
From your perspective how effective were these policies?

- 3) How did students in your school respond to your being out?
What did they do? What did they say? How did they behave?

- 4) How did the adults in your school (teachers, staff, administrators, counsellors) respond to your being out?
What did they do? What did they say? How did they behave?

- 5) What else can you tell me about your school experience? What have we missed?

- 6) Tell me about an ideal school environment, from your perspective, for any student to be able to freely express their sexual identity.
What does this ideal school look like? What does this school feel like?
What happens there?

- 7) What do you hope will be gained from this research?

APPENDIX E – PARENT INTERVIEW GUIDE

This is a conversation. The questions we have here will help guide this conversation. I encourage you to ask me questions, too. Feel free to share specific stories as we talk our way through this conversation. Should you at any time during the conversation wish to not answer a question, end the conversation or prefer the audio-tape be turned off please let me know. Are we ready?

- 1) What was your experience as a parent of an out school student?
How did you feel about the school? What did you think about the school?
What did you learn about the school? How did you live with your child being out in the school?
- 2) What is it about the school that enabled your child to be ‘out’?
Tell me about specific things, places, spaces, people, classes that supported your child being ‘out’.
What school policies are you aware of in place to support queer youth?
From your perspective how effective were these policies?
- 3) How did students in the school respond to your child being out?
What did they do? What did they say? How did they behave?
- 4) How did the adults in your child’s school (teachers, staff, administrators, counsellors) respond to your child being out?
What did they do? What did they say? How did they behave?
- 5) What else can you tell me about your experience of your child’s schooling? What have we missed?
- 6) Tell me about an ideal school environment, from your perspective, for any student to be able to freely express their sexual identity.
What does this ideal school look like? What does this school feel like?
What happens there?
- 7) What do you hope will be gained